THE HISTORY

OF

EARLY ENGLISH LITERATURE

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BEING THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH POETRY FROM ITS BEGINNINGS TO THE ACCESSION OF KING ÆLFRED

BY

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Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn,
And to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.—ISAIAH, li. 1

IN TWO VOLUMES

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CHAPTER XIII

THE RISE OF LITERATURE

Wessex and Mercia

The previous chapters have discussed the way of life of the English so far as it is represented in their literature before 800. A good deal of their poetry has been used in illustration, and has left, I trust, on the minds of the readers of this book, a distinct impression of their manner of thought when under those manifold emotions received from man and nature the shaping of which in musical words, when it is done lawfully and beautifully, is poetry.

These discussions have been general, and the quotations taken from poems which were written as far as we know during the seventh and eighth centuries. It will be fitting now, even at the risk of some repetition, to give a clear account, in order, of the rising of literature in our land after the coming of Christianity, and of the circumstances which surrounded and influenced its youth. This naturally falls into two distinct parts—literature in the South and literature in the North. The former may be more briefly dismissed than the latter. It rose rapidly with the arrival at Canterbury of

Theodore and Hadrian; it decayed as rapidly after the death of Ealdhelm in 709. Moreover, it can scarcely be called English literature. What remains to us is wholly Latin, and might be left altogether aside in this history were it not that it has a certain bearing on the vernacular literature of Northumbria. In the North, on the contrary, our chief interest is in the vernacular poetry, and it ran, we may roughly say, a course of a hundred years. Caedmon began to write about the year 670, one year later than the coming of Theodore to Canterbury. The probable date of Cynewulf's last poem lies somewhere between 770 and 790.

The two literatures then began together, but their course was very different. The vernacular literature of the North grew into a flourishing manhood; the Latin literature of the South perished in its youth. Literature in the South was an exotic, and it died because it was an alien. Literature in the North was of native growth; and it died from an alien blow. Its murderers were the Danes. In the ninth century, then, literature, north and south, had perished. The time came when below and above the Humber England's voice was as silent as the grave. Then the South again took up the pen it had dropped, and Ælfred restored not only the native, but the Latin literature of England. As yet, however, the time of Ælfred is far away, and I turn to the history of literature in Wessex and Mercia, from the coming of Augustine to its silence—from 597 to the death (if I have to choose a date) of Æthelhard of Canterbury in 805. After that I shall tell the history, in order, of Northumbrian literature till its overthrow by the Danes.

The books Augustine brought to England were a Bible in two volumes, a Testament, a Psalter, an exposition of the Gospels and Epistles, a book of martyrs and some apocryphal lives of the Apostles. Fresh books arrived in 601, and it is said that two of these MSS. of the Gospels still exist—one at Corpus, Cambridge, the other at the Bodleian.[1] Shortly after the baptism of 10,000 (?) persons in the Swale on Christmas Day 597, the place where the cathedral rose was occupied, and the abbey of SS. Peter and Paul (St. Augustine's) was founded. It became the seat of the first learning and literature that Rome carried to this land, and the books Augustine brought over were enshrined in it. The first library was begun, and with it the first schools. We cannot, however, say for certain that the Latin Mission at once founded schools in Kent, though Baeda says, speaking of thirty years later, that the wish of Sigeberht to have schools in East Anglia, such as he had seen in Gaul, was carried into effect by Bishop Felix, *after the pattern of the schools in Kent*. What is interesting is a conjecture of Earle's that there may have been Roman schools of grammar still existing in Canterbury when Augustine arrived. If Canterbury was not wholly destroyed by the invaders, it is just possible that the Roman schools may have been spared.

It is still more interesting to know that not long

[1] If the illuminated MS. of the Gospels in Latin now in C.C. College be in reality that sent by Gregory to Augustine, as Wanley thought, it is a great treasure. Professor Westwood thinks that the drawings are the oldest remains of Roman pictorial art in this country, and, with the exception of a fourth century MS. at Vienna, the oldest he can discover anywhere.

The MS. of the Gospels in the Bodleian, which Westwood also declares is one of the oldest Roman MSS. in this country, is rubricated, but is without miniatures.

after Augustine came, in 597, the Witan was held which enacted the first code of ancient laws that we possess written in our mother tongue. The title of this code runs thus: "This be the dooms that Æthelbriht, King, ordained in Augustine's days." They were written in Roman letters, and this is what Baeda means when he says that they were "according to the Roman precedent" (*juxta exempla Romanorum*). They are the first piece of written English of which we hear.[1] We do not, however, possess them in the original Kentish dialect, but in a West Saxon translation, and in a register that dates from the twelfth century. This Kentish dialect[2] is, then, the first vehicle of English prose, and the schools of Kent were the rude cradle of English learning. However, there was very little care for English. All the archbishops up to the death of Honorius in 653 were Italian; and neither understood the English character nor could sympathise with any vernacular poetry. A certain amount of Art was, however, introduced in these first fifty years. Architecture, after the Roman

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[1] In 673 the next Kentish code appeared. "Hlothhaere and Eadric, kings of the men of Kent, enlarged the laws their predecessors had made," etc.; and in 696 King Withred (691-725) *se mildesta cyning Cantwara*—"set forth more dooms."

[2] It is thought that the Epinal Glossary best represents the Kentish dialect. It is of the seventh century; an English-Latin Dictionary. There are also six documents of the first half of the ninth century which are written in this dialect (Codex Dipl. 226, 228, 229, 231, 235, 238—Kemble). There is, too, a Psalter, with a gloss, now supposed to be a Kentish gloss. The Palæographical Society declares that this Psalter is of the year 700, and the gloss late in the ninth or at the beginning of the tenth century. Professor Westwood called it the Psalter of St. Augustine. It is plainly written in England and not in Rome, and is sometimes called the *Surtees Psalter*. It is worth while to record these remains of the Kentish dialect, because "from this dialect the West Saxon was developed; in other words, it is the earliest form of that imperial dialect in which the great body of extant Old English literature is preserved. Nevertheless, the Kentish did not ripen into the maturer outlines of the West Saxon dialect without the intervention of a third dialect, etc. etc."—Earle, *A.-S. Literature*, p. 97.

model, began. Canterbury Cathedral was built of stone, in imitation of the Basilica of St. Peter, and Honorius introduced the Roman music. He was succeeded by Frithona (Deus Dedit), an Englishman, after whose death no archbishop was elected for four years. Then the election was put into the hands of Pope Vitalian, who sent Theodore of Tarsus, and Hadrian, an African monk of the Nisidan monastery, the first as archbishop, the second as his deacon, to England. Both were admirable scholars, and with them left an English scholar then staying in Rome, Benedict Biscop. In May 669 Theodore was enthroned at Canterbury. Immediately after his enthronement he visited the English kingdoms, and he began to make English the tongue of Christianity by commanding that every father should take care that his children be taught to say the Creed and the Lord's Prayer in the vulgar tongue.[1] At the same time he took possession of St. Augustine's monastery, made it a school of learning, and set over it, till Hadrian's arrival in 671, Benedict Biscop. When Hadrian came, Theodore determined to make the English clergy a body of scholars. Day by day a greater number of disciples gathered into Canterbury from Ireland as well as England. "Streams of knowledge," says Baeda, "daily flowed from Theodore and Hadrian to water the hearts of their hearers." This was the true beginning of literature in the south of England.

There were classes for ecclesiastical music, arith-

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[1] Nor do I like to omit, as having some relation at least to English literature, the Ten Articles which Theodore drew up for signature by the bishops at the Council of Hertford in 673. This is "the first constitutional measure of the collective English race: no act of secular legislation can be produced parallel to it before the reign of Ælfred or rather of his son Edward."—Stubbs' *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, Art. Theodorus.

metic, and astronomy; for caligraphy and illuminating books; for medical subjects, for composition, especially for the making of Latin verse. Greek and Hebrew formed part of the instruction; the Latin writers were read. Rhetoric, theology, and the related subjects were taught; and Theodore's reputation for ecclesiastical learning and canon law extended over Europe. Some record of this learning soon appeared, and was stored in the library. This was the *Penitential of Theodore*, drawn up by some priest from Theodore's oral answers to questions concerning discipline; the first book of the kind published by authority in the Western Church, and "the foundation," Hook says, "of all the other 'libelli penitentiales' in England." Thus Canterbury became not only a centre of scholarship but a producer of books; and from this time there was no need to seek for learned foreigners to fill the bishops' chairs in the English kingdoms, or to instruct the people. The land had its own scholars, and soon taught its teachers.

Brihtwald, the next archbishop, is only interesting to us because he studied his own tongue. "He was a man," says Baeda, "whose knowledge of the Greek, Latin, and Saxon learning and language was manifold and thorough." Tatwine, who succeeded him in 731, was a scholar of Theodore, and was "splendidly versed in Holy writ." A few *ænigmata* in Latin verse exist under his name, and it is said that he, like Ealdhelm, wrote some poems in Anglo-Saxon. Daniel, who assisted at Tatwine's consecration, Bishop of Winchester from 705-744, was perhaps the most learned bishop of this time. He helped Baeda in the *Ecclesiastical History*; he was closely bound up with Boniface, and corresponded with him; and the growth of the

missions and of the West Saxon Church and schools was largely indebted to his work. But the scholar of the Canterbury school who gathered into himself all the learning of the time was Ealdhelm.

He was born about the middle of the seventh century, and was related to the royal family of Wessex. Being excited from his youth by the new learning, he joined himself to a school which had suddenly sprung up in his native province. A wandering Scot, one of the numerous scholars who in that age passed to and fro between England and Ireland,[1] Mailduf by name, set up a hermitage near the castle, called in Saxon Ingelborne Castle, built by Dunwallo Mulmutius, not far from the royal seat of Brokenborough. The folk in the castle gave him leave to build a hut, and he set up a school in it. This information, which may be authentic, is in a history of Malmesbury ascribed to William of Malmesbury, but which is not extant. Leland quotes it; but Stubbs says that we may infer from the mention of Dunwallo Mulmutius that the account cannot be earlier than the twelfth century. From William of Malmesbury's acknowledged writings we understand that Ealdhelm received his monastic habit at Malmesbury, and that there was a Mailduf, a Scot and hermit, who taught a school, and set up a small basilica. After a time, scholars crowded round

[1] In one of Ealdhelm's letters, written to a friend of his who, after six years of study, had returned from "dark and rainy Ireland," he describes the host of English students who filled whole fleets, in going to and fro between England and Ireland that they might discover in Ireland the secrets of learning, "as if there were no masters in England of Greek and Latin who could unfold to them the problems of the celestial library." Then he describes with vigour the Canterbury schools, and the bands of Irish disciples who used to flock round Theodore. There was then a constant interchange at this time in the South, as there was also in the North, of English and Irish learning.

him so eagerly, that the hut became the kernel of a monastery, and Ealdhelm who had taught there for many years was made, after Mailduf's death, the Abbot of Malmesbury (Maildulfi Burgus).

He had been a student at Canterbury with Theodore; with Hadrian whom he loved and honoured to the end. "My Father," he writes, "most beloved, venerable teacher of my rude infancy, I embrace you with a rush of pure tenderness; I long to see you again." The heart of Ealdhelm, below his pedantry, was so eager and natural that he won the love he gave. When he was made Bishop of Sherborne he wished his monks at Malmesbury to elect a new abbot. "While you live," they answered, "we desire to live with you and under your rule." It is said that when he returned from his voyages, not only did his monks meet him with hymns and songs and censers, but a crowd of the people danced before him with joy and gestures of delight. He possessed the sense of honour which was the natural heritage of his war-like race. In a letter to the clergy of Wilfrid he recalls the ancient devotion of thegn to chief, and challenges them to be as faithful to their head, as a warrior was to his lord. "What," he cries, "would be said of laymen who should abandon in his misfortune the master they served in good fortune; what of those who loved peace at home rather than exile with their prince?" He travelled continually through his diocese, preaching by day and night, and he died (709), on one of his journeys, in a Somersetshire village called Dulting near a church of wood which he was building. He set up monasteries, two especially, at Bradford on the Avon and at Frome;[1]

[1] Sherborne, where his See was afterwards fixed, and Wareham, near Poole, were probably founded by him. We may fancy him wandering down from

and he advised Ine when that King undertook the restoration of Glastonbury. When he was made Bishop of the western division of the diocese of Wessex he carried still farther, in conjunction with Bishop Daniel, his educational work, filling Dorset and Somerset with monastic schools, and training, we may well think, men like Boniface and his comrades for their missionary work.

He was an architect as well as a preacher, and when the Norman architects saw his churches at Sherborne and Malmesbury, they owned their excellence and left them standing. Other arts were also his. If we may trust Faricius, he played on all kinds of instruments—as eager a musician as Dunstan. He is the first Englishman whose literary writings remain to us, and whose classical knowledge was famous. He wrote Latin verse with ease, and boasted that he was the first of his race who studied the Latin metres. He wrote a long treatise on Latin Prosody, and he showed what he could do in this way by the treatment in Latin hexameters of the stories told in his prose treatise *De laudibus Virginitatis.* He knew and quoted Horace, Lucan, Juvenal, Persius, Terence, and others which might seem strange to his monkish habit. He read, according to his biographers, the Old Testament in Hebrew; he spoke Greek; he taught the usual course of learning and it is supposed he wrote on Roman Law. Among these severer studies, he played at making riddles in the manner of Symphosius, and as these riddles went to the North with his treatise on Prosody, they gave

Wareham to look on the sea from that headland in Dorsetshire which first bore his name (St. Ealdhelm's Head), but which, overlaid with the name of an elder saint, is now St. Alban's Head.

afterwards to Cynewulf the impulse to compose similar enigmas. The Acircius to whom he sent this treatise was Aldfrith, King of Northumbria, a friend of his boyhood, whom he begs with great *naïveté* to read through the whole of his book. "It would be absurd," he says, "if you did not take the trouble to chew and re-chew that which I have taken so much pains to grind and knead for you." I doubt whether Aldfrith took the trouble, for the style, like that of all Ealdhelm's work, is always fantastic, pompous and full of rhetorical tricks. He writes Latin as Lyly wrote English in his *Euphues*, and his fancifulness often degenerates into a fastidious pedantry. He is keen and gay, but without humour. Perhaps no better specimen of his "precious" way of writing can be given than his letter about Theodore and his Irish scholars, the whole of which is written to display his gamesome and alliterative use of Latin. "Graeci involute, Romani splendide, Angli pompatice dictare solent," says William of Malmesbury, and Ealdhelm, he thinks, did well in all these styles. Amid this literary play he knew how to be an ascetic, as rigid and stern with himself as the Benedict whom he so much admired. The man we see reading Virgil and Terence in his cell, or writing a letter of alliterative Latin prose for his own entertainment, or making a riddle, is seen a few hours after, at least in the pages of William of Malmesbury, standing up to his neck in a well near the monastery, and reciting, in this primitive manner, on a wintry night, the Psalms of the Day. But that which makes us most happy to think of, is that he did not neglect the songs of his native tongue.[1] There is a well-

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[1] Bishop Stubbs calls them *hymns*.

known story told of him, how, as he went from town to town, and found that the buyers and sellers at the fairs did not come to church, he used, like a gleeman, to stand on the bridge or in the public way and sing songs to them in the English tongue, and by the sweetness of his speech lead them to come with him to hear the word of God. These songs which he had composed for the people lasted when his Latin work had passed from remembrance. Ælfred had one, it seems, in his handbook, a *carmen triviale*, as vain a song, perhaps as heathen a legend, as Dunstan sang to his harp when he was a youth. Nor did the song die. Malmesbury says, in the twelfth century, that it was still commonly sung in England—*quod adhuc vulgo cantitatur.*

The variety and the contrasts in Ealdhelm were the result of an active intelligence, half intoxicated by the new wine of literature. Whatever we may say of his false taste in style, there is no doubt of the impulse he gave to literary activity and education in all directions. He had correspondence with Ireland, with Gaul, with Rome; Northumbria was influenced by his writings; and he wrote a letter on the schism between the British and English Church to Gerontius, King of the Damnonian Britons, which converted that King and his folk to the Roman usage concerning Easter. Among his many distractions he did not neglect the education of the more delightful sex. Osgitha, whom he urges to a deeper study of the Scriptures, is his "most beloved sister." "Most beloved" is not enough to express his affection. "Vale," he says in an outburst of tenderness, "decies dilectissima, imo centies et millies." To Hildelida, Abbess of Barking, he dedicated his *Praises of Virginity*, and with her he

names, as bound to him by intimate friendship, Aldgida and Scholastica, Hidburga and Burngida, Eulalia and others. These knew, it seems, the classic poets; he quotes to them Ovid and Virgil, and bids them farewell with his own brightness and affection: "Valete, o flores ecclesiae, sorores monasticae, alumnae scholasticae, Christi margaritae, paradisi gemmae, et coelestis Patriae participes. Amen." This is, indeed, to make learning charming, and it was one of the reasons he did so much for contemporary, and so little for after learning.

When he died in 709 this literary life was in full stream. Not of it, but still, as we look back, not apart from it, was one ancient monument of English thought made under the guidance of Ealdhelm's faithful friend, Ine, King of Wessex. This is the *Laws of Ine*, the oldest West Saxon laws. Their date is about 690, and we have them in an appendix to the *Laws of Ælfred*.[1] They have this much literary interest, that as "the foundation of the Laws of Wessex, they were also the foundation of the Laws of all England." I quote one of them (taking Earle's translation, *A.-S. Lit.* p. 153), because it seems to skirt the edge of literature. It quotes two proverbs: "In case any one burn a tree in a wood, and it come to light who did it, let him pay the full penalty and give sixty shillings, *because fire is a thief.* If one fell in a wood ever so many trees, and it be found out afterwards, let him pay for three trees, each with thirty shillings. He is not required to pay for more of them, however many they might be, *because the axe is a reporter and not a thief.*"[2]

[1] This noble parchment of the Laws of Ælfred is, along with the oldest Saxon Chronicle, in Benet College (Corpus Christi), Cambridge.

[2] These laws provide for the new Welsh population added to the West Saxon

With Ealdhelm as Ine's friend and kinsman, and as co-worker with Bishop Daniel, we may fairly think that learning grew in Wessex, and extended with the extension of the kingdom. Indeed, we know that Ine was especially active in establishing monasteries and in the work of education. He found at Glastonbury the ancient church of wood, enriched it with treasures, and set up close beside it a church of stone which Dunstan rebuilt. It is the sole British church in England "which passed on unhurt into the hands of the Englishman."[1] He took part in the founding of Malmesbury and endowing of Abingdon. Sherborne and Bradford, Wimborne, Nursling, Tisbury, Waltham, Frome, rose under his care, and he may have had something to do with Wells. There is also a tradition which at least illustrates his reputation, that he, rather than Offa, set up the Saxon quarter at Rome. Meanwhile some light is thrown on the continuance of literary activity in the South by the things already told concerning the assistance given to Baeda in his history by the bishops and abbots of the south of England.

Incessant wars followed the departure of Ine to Rome. Wessex fell under the rule of Mercia in Æthelheard's reign; but his successor Cuthred recovered the liberty of Wessex at the battle of Burford.

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realm by the conquests of Ine. Ine had got as far as Taunton, which he founded as a border fortress, and Exeter may have, either before or not long after, become an English possession. At whatever date it became English, it did not cease also to be Welsh. It was divided into an English and a Welsh city. It is fitting again to draw attention to this mingling of the English and Welsh here in the South, as on the March, and in the North. There must have been an interchange of poetry, an influence of Welsh on English verse, of English on Welsh. The division of the two races, under Ine and his successors, had ceased to exist in the days of Ælfred. No distinction is made between them in Ælfred's laws. The Welsh were then absorbed into the English.

[1] Freeman, *English Towns*, p. 92.

I mention this battle because it has a certain relation to literature. In it Æthelhun, the Proud Alderman, was the standard bearer of Cuthred. He bore the Dragon of Wessex in the van, and his bravery decided the fight. The account given by Henry of Huntingdon, part of which I quote, is probably drawn from the ancient song made after the victory.

"The armies being drawn up in battle array, and, rushing forward, Æthelhun, who led the West Saxons, bearing the royal standard, a golden dragon, pierced through the standard-bearer of the enemy. Upon this, a shout arose, and the followers of Cuthred being much encouraged, battle was joined on both sides. Then the thunder of war, the clash of arms, the clang of blows, and the cries of the wounded, resounded terribly, and a desperate and most decisive battle began. . . . The arrogance of their pride sustained the Mercians, the fear of slavery kindled the courage of the men of Wessex. But wherever Æthelhun fell on the enemy's ranks he cleared a way before him, his tremendous battle-axe cleaving, swift as lightning, both arms and limbs. On the other hand, wherever the brave King of Mercia turned, the enemy were slaughtered, for his invincible sword rent armour as if it were a vestment, and bones as if they were flesh. When, therefore, it happened that the King and the chief met each other, it was as when two fires from opposite quarters consume all that opposes them."

Cynewulf replaced Sigeberht who at first succeeded Cuthred in 755, and Cynewulf is also bound up with literature. The account of his death (784) given in the *Chronicle* under the year 755 is, as far as we know, the most ancient piece of connected prose in the English tongue. It seems fitting that Wessex, in which English

prose and English history were developed by Ælfred, should be the kingdom which gave us the earliest piece of prose, and that this prose should be a piece of history. The latter part of it—the story of the fight—was probably in its original form a lay, reduced by some monastic annalist of Wessex to prose, and kept intact by the compilers of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. And it is extremely probable that it was put into prose at the very time, or a few years later than the events of which it tells; "it is, in short, by far the oldest historical prose in any Teutonic language. The style is of the rudest character, contrasting remarkably with the polished language of the later portions of the *Chronicle*." This is Mr. Sweet's opinion, who adds that there are archaisms in it which escaped the eye of the ninth-century reviser. The narrative is so vivid, rough, and simple, and the things done so war-like and tragic, and the temper of the warriors so English, that I give it as it stands:—

755 (784).[1] In this year Cynewulf and the West Saxon Witan took from Sigebryht his kingdom, except Hamptonshire, for unrighteous deeds; and he had that, until he slew the alderman who had dwelt with him longest. And him, then, Cynewulf drove into Andred, and he wonned there until a herdsman stabbed him at Privet's-flood[2] (and avenged the alderman Cumbra). And this Cynewulf, in mickle fights, fought often with the Brito-Welsh; and, about 31 winters after he had the kingdom, willed to drive away an ætheling, who was hight Cyneheard (and this Cyneheard was the brother of that Sigebryht). And then (Cyneheard) heard of the king with a little band in a woman's company in Merton; and he beset him there, and surrounded the bower outside, before the men who were with the king found out that he was there.

But when the king knew it, he went to the door and warded him manfully, until he saw the ætheling, and then he outrushed upon him, and sorely wounded him; and they all ceased not to fight against the king until they had slain him.

And now the king's thegns, hearing the cries of the woman, were

[1] See Note, Earle, *Two of the Saxon Chronicles*, p. 292 (1865).

[2] Doubtfully identified with Privet in Hants.—Sweet.

aware of the un-stillness, and they ran thither, whosoever then was ready and rathest. And to each of them the ætheling offered money and life, and none of them would take it; but they went on, always fighting, until they all lay (dead), except one British hostage, and he was sorely wounded.

Then in the morning the thegns of the king who had been behind him heard that the king was slain. Then they rode thither, even his alderman Osric, and Wiferth his thegn and the men which he erst had left behind him, and came up with the ætheling in the burg where the king lay slain. Now the ætheling's men had locked the gates against them, but they went up to the gates. And then the ætheling offered them their own doom of money and land if they would grant him the kingdom; and it was made known to them that their kinsmen were with him, who would not from him. And then said they—That no kinsman could be dearer to them than their lord, and they never would follow his slayer. And then they offered to their kinsmen that they should go forth sound; and they said—*That* had been offered to each of their comrades who erst were with the king. Then said they that they no more minded it than your comrades who were slain with the king. And they ceased not to fight about the gates until they got inside, and they slew the ætheling and the men who were with him, all but one, who was the alderman's godson; and he saved his life, and yet he was oft wounded.

It remains to say that up to this date, 755, Latin literature, written by Englishmen, is illustrated by the letters of Boniface. As Boniface was a Wessex man as well as Willibald, this may be perhaps the best place to touch on the most famous of English missionaries to the Continent, and to select the points where the missions influence English literature.

The first of them was Willibrord,[1] a Northumbrian, the Apostle of the Frisians, who was born in the year 657. The story of his life is told by two English scholars of this time, by Baeda and by Alcuin. He illustrates the literary intercommunion of the time between England and Ireland, for he left the monastic house at Ripon to join Ecgberht's and Wigberht's school in Ireland. After thirteen years of study he sailed

[1] His father, Willigis, representative of a noble house, had founded a monastic community in honour of St. Andrew, north of the Humber, on one of the numerous promontories of that coast, a house probably Celtic.

to the Rhine to convert the Frisians (690). For nearly fifty years he laboured among the heathen, preaching in Friesland, among the Old Saxons, and touching the Danes, in which visit he landed on Heligoland, and saw the ancient shrine and fountain of Fosite. No one can tell, and it engages the imagination to think of it, how many Teutonic legends may have got into England from such wanderings, or how much of English sacred poetry, such as Caedmon's, may have been left behind at Utrecht, where Willibrord founded his archbishopric, or at Epternach, near Trier, where he set up a monastery; and the same suggestion may be made with regard to the missions both of Boniface and Willibald. He was also the first who brought the learning of England among the Franks, and, freeing it from insularity, increased its range. His friendship with Pippin, with Charles Martel, whose son, Pippin le Bref, he baptized, was the beginning of an association between English scholars and the Franks which —culminating with Alcuin and Charles the Great— influenced the growth of literature at home and abroad. The schools he founded at Utrecht were one of the centres of European civilisation.

Winfrid, to whom Gregory II. gave the name of Boniface, was much more connected with England than Willibrord, and knit still more closely together the English, the Franks, and the Teutonic nations the Franks subdued. Born at Crediton in Devonshire about 680, he was educated at Wulfhard's monastery in Exeter, transferred to Hampshire, and received priesthood when Ine was reigning in Wessex in 710. Eager to convert the heathen, he landed in Friesland in 716, but failing at that time to find success, returned

to England and thence went to Rome. In 719 he was sent by Gregory to convert Central Europe. The Irish monks had preceded him in Thuringia. There he stayed for a time, and after a visit to Friesland returned to Thuringia. Many heathen remained in Thuringia and the lands around it, and Boniface worked among a congeries of German tribes in the great forests, amidst folk who spoke almost the same language as his own, and were indeed of kindred blood. He bound them and the other German tribes he influenced up with England, for he set over the sees and monastic houses he established English archbishops, bishops, abbots and nuns, along with a crowd of helpers whom he fetched out of England. In all his difficulties, and they were many, he took the advice of the English bishops, and Bishop Daniel, Baeda's correspondent, was his most trusted redesman. He entertained a constant interchange of letters with English monks and nuns, and the religious life of England was thus interested in the Continent. There was a constant going to and fro between England and Central Germany, and the influence of this on the literary elements in England, though small, must have been appreciable. His letters still interest us. They paint the time and the manners of the German tribes. The many schools he set on foot, especially the famous one at the monastery of Fulda, enable us, with some pride, to point to England as the mother of learning among the Teutonic tribes. He himself did not disdain the finer arts of literature. He wrote verses for his friends ; he even composed a short poem for his sister of ten ænigmata, which is not wanting in grace and elegance ; ænigmata not written for play, as those of Tatwine or Symphosius, but on the Christian virtues.

The MS. which contains these pleasant Latin poems is in the British Museum. He fell, a martyr, in his Master's service, white-haired and bowed with age.

Fifty years or so before the death of Boniface in 755, Willibald, whom some think his kinsman, was born in Wessex, probably in Hampshire. His name is famous in the history of travel. So eager was the youth for voyaging that his father, his brother Winnibald, and his sister Walpurgis, gathered their friends together, broke up their English home, and went off, with this youth of eighteen, to Rome. It is a good illustration of the passion for pilgrimage, which, in the eighth century seized on Englishmen, and which enlarged, as I have said, their imagination and its shaping power. They left England about 718, and after many difficulties reached Rome. Willibald left his brother there, and travelled through Sicily, Ephesus, Cyprus, Tortosa, Emessa, to Damascus. Thence he visited Palestine, passing through all the sacred places near the Sea of Galilee to Jordan, Jericho, and Jerusalem. Four times (journeying meanwhile over the whole of Palestine, visiting Tyre and Sidon, Libanus and Mount Carmel) he stayed at Jerusalem, and reached Constantinople in 725, where he lived for two years. In 727, ten years after his departure from England, at the age of twenty-eight or thirty, he was received into the monastery of Monte Cassino, and after some years went to Rome, whence he was sent by Gregory III. to help his countryman, Boniface, in the year 739. In 740 he met his brother, Winnibald, in Thuringia, and next year was made Bishop of Eichstadt by Boniface. The one literary interest of his life is his long and dangerous travel through the East, which we may say was recorded by himself, and which increased

the imaginative materials of English learning. The nun who wrote this Voyage is said to have written it from his dictation.

Lullus, who succeeded Boniface as Bishop or Archbishop of Mainz in 755, may also be mentioned in this connection. He was a West Saxon by birth, and perhaps a kinsman of Boniface. Educated at Malmesbury, under Abbot Eaba, he left England about the year 732. He was in correspondence with England during his whole life. When he succeeded Boniface, "letters," says Bishop Stubbs, "poured in upon him from the ecclesiastics of his native land," in particular from the lords of Canterbury, Worcester, and Winchester. Later on he is again in communication, asking and giving advice, with Canterbury, Rochester, and Winchester, and with the King of Kent; and further on with the Abbot of Wearmouth, with Æthelberht, Archbishop of York—borrowing the books of Baeda and lending books on cosmography—with the Abbot of Ripon, with the Kings of Wessex and Northumbria. There is no better example, not even that of Boniface, of the continual intercourse between England and the Continent, than that afforded by the life of Lullus.

As to Willehad, a Northumbrian, and the other famous name among these English missionaries to Germany, whose appointment to Bremen was recommended by Lullus, there is nothing in his life except his friendship with Alcuin and Charles the Great, and the works he is said to have written but which remain unedited, to make him of any interest in a history of literature. He died, as Bishop of Bremen, and built, it is said, a church of wonderful beauty.

As we return from this episode we find little more to say of the history of literature in Wessex. Cuth-

bert[1] and Bregwin were succeeded in the Archbishopric of Canterbury by Jaenbert in 765, whose life ended in the midst of the struggle between Canterbury and the new Metropolitan See which Offa set up at Lichfield. Æthelhard, his successor, became a fugitive, and a letter sent to him by Alcuin allows us to see into how sad a condition learning had been reduced in Kent, and if in Kent, in the whole of the southern province. "Return," he says, "and bring back to the house of God the youths who were studying there, the choir of singers, and the penmen with their books. . . . Above all, let it be your strictest care to restore the reading of the Holy Scriptures." He won back, however, in 803 the supremacy of Canterbury, but he did not win back, nor did his successors, any of the learning which Theodore had originated. Literature was now nearly at an end in Wessex. The monasteries had ceased to be places of education, their abbots were chiefly laymen ; reform, continually urged upon them, was as continually neglected, and at last the priests ceased even to be able to read their books.

It might have been expected that Ecgberht—who had passed his youth at the court of Charles the Great, and must have known Alcuin and been interested by him and by Charles' incursions into educa-

[1] Cuthbert, Archbishop of Canterbury from 740 to 758, did little or nothing for literature, but he was known as a writer of Latin verse. There are two things of his which, if they are genuine, have one an historical, and the other an artistic interest. He succeeded Walhstod, Bishop of Hereford, and in the epitaph which he wrote on Walhstod, he recorded the names of his predecessors in the See. In the second piece of Latin verse he describes the completion by him of a great cross which Walhstod had begun—

"Argenti atque auri fabricare monilibus amplis."

These two small sets of verse, which are only to be found in William of Malmesbury, "are, if genuine, two of the most interesting minor relics of eighth-century history in England, besides charters and councils."—Stubbs' *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, Art. Walhstod.

tion; who must have heard of all that the English missionaries had done in Germany and felt the power Charles had gained through monasticism and Rome—would have, on coming to the West Saxon throne in 802, taken some interest in English learning and pushed it forwards, but there is no trace of any steady effort on his part in this direction. He was probably too much employed in bringing all England under his sway. In 828 Mercia fell before him. Northumbria submitted in 829; and the sole piece of literature belonging to his reign is the single verse of the war-song which recorded his victory over the Marchland—"Ellandun's stream with slain was choked; 'twas foully stained with blood."[1] Nevertheless, now that he was overlord of all England, and the country wrought into one politically, as it had been long one ecclesiastically, we might have looked for a fresh development of literature. But fate was against this hope. The Vikings had already made their first descent in 787 on the coast of Dorsetshire; and in 833 Ecgberht, warned by their ravaging of Ireland, Frisia, Scotland, France, and the Northern Islands, held a Witan to concert measures of defence against them. In 832 (4?) they descended on Sheppey, and the next year they came to Charmouth. Those who had allied themselves with the Cornishmen were defeated by Ecgberht at Hengestdun in 835. They fell on London in 839, and plundered Rochester. 838 had found them in Lindsey and East Anglia, and on the coast of Kent. In 845 they were defeated on the Parret in Somersetshire. Up to this time the attacks had been desultory coast-

[1] Another war-verse belongs to the next reign, to the victory won over the Danes at Ockley in 851—"Men like corn in mowing time fell in both these mighty hosts."

raids. But in 851 Rorik, with a fleet of 350 sail, entered the mouth of the Thames, sailed up inside of Thanet, and up the Stour to Canterbury which he sacked with furious slaughter, and passed on to London, where he defeated Berhtwulf the Mercian King and entered the lands north of the Thames. Thence the Vikings went into Surrey, and were driven back in a great battle by Æthelwulf, King of Wessex. Nevertheless, in spite of English victories by land and sea, the Vikings wintered for the first time in England in the year 851 (?), and held their place, till in 855 they transferred their winter camp to Sheppey. In 860 Winchester, the capital of Wessex, was plundered, and in 865, a great army wintered in Thanet, and devastated Kent. Then came the Danes in 866—*The Army*,—resolute to conquer and settle instead of merely raiding like the Vikings. This *Army* wintered in East Anglia, and conquered Northumbria. When in 868 they marched towards Mercia and wintered on the Trent, Wessex was called in to help Mercia. For a time Mercia escaped, but soon after, all the great abbeys of the marsh country were destroyed, and in 871 *The Army* crossed the Thames into Wessex. It was met at Ashdown by Æthelred and Ælfred, and defeated with great carnage.

This is in brief the story of the final ruin of southern literature up to the days of Ælfred. The unhappy tale began in the days of Ecgberht. It is only too clear that he and his successors had something more important to do than cherishing learning. They were forced to fight year by year for the very existence of the country with these fierce sea-wolves, whose bitterest attacks were made on the monasteries. When we read that in 851 Canterbury had been sacked by the Danes, and

see in this an image of the storm which fell on all the centres of education, we can understand how it was that Ælfred in his youth complained that he could not find a master to teach him Latin. There is no more then to say of literature in Kent and Wessex, till in the hands of Ælfred it arose again.

It would seem that we might now pass on to the history of the rise of Northumbrian literature, wherein all our chief work lies, but Mercia rose to great honour during the two hundred years of which we have here written, and it is fitting to briefly touch the points in Mercian history which belong to the interests of literature. We have seen that sometime after Penda's death Mercia became Christian. Wulfhere, his son—657-675, in the very years, that is, that vernacular literature began so bravely in Northumbria—founded a number of abbeys and monasteries. Medeshamstede—in the fen-country then subject to Mercia—may claim him as one of its patrons, but the whole story is mixed up with legend and forgery. Fable gathers also round other foundations attributed to him ; but the growth of fable proves, at least, that centres of learning now arose in the heathen realm. Under Æthelred, who followed Wulfhere, the Mercian Church was organised. It ceased to have any Celtic elements. The King was a friend of Theodore and Wilfrid, and monasteries, in large numbers, were founded and endowed. With Æthelbald (716-757) his third successor, we touch literature more closely. Among the monasteries to which he was generous was that of Evesham, and Evesham was founded by Ecgwin, Bishop of Worcester. It is said, on the faith of two later biographies, that Ecgwin narrated his own

life, and he has been called our first autobiographer, but, though it is right to record this, the thing is exceedingly questionable. Æthelbald was certainly mixed up with scholars, for Tatwine, Nothelm, and Cuthbert, all Archbishops of Canterbury and of Theodore's school, were connected with Mercia and perhaps appointed by the influence of the King. Moreover, Boniface and he were upon friendly terms, even though Æthelbald's life was morally disgraceful. The council at Clovesho, held in 747, was not only directed against the immoralities of the monasteries which seem to have lost in luxury all care for learning, but was also probably intended as a silent reproach to the King. We may also connect with his reign the story of Guthlac. The *Life of Guthlac*, written by Felix between the years 747 and 749, was contemporary with Æthelbald. We may, therefore, at least tend to accept the story told in it that when Æthelbald was young and an exile he was the friend and visited the hermitage of Guthlac, deep in the fen-country, on the site of which in later years rose the great Abbey of Crowland. This *Life*, however, is not a Mercian but an East Anglian book. It is dedicated by its writer, Felix, to Alfwold of East Anglia, and continues, after Baeda, the literature of biography among the English. The book lived, and was the cause of other literature. It was translated from Latin into Anglo-Saxon in the tenth or eleventh century. It formed the foundation of the second part of a poem attributed to Cynewulf, which, if it be by him, supplies us with the sole date which belongs to the life of that mysterious poet. The story brings into vivid light not only the scenery of the fen-country, but the character of the young ætheling of the time when the influence of Chris-

tianity was still fresh, and acted on a national type lately emerged from heathendom.[1] The book represents Guthlac in contact with a great number of events important and unimportant, serious and ludicrous; and all of these, met in different ways by the saint, open out his pleasant character. Various persons are, moreover, brought into touch with him, and though the sketches of these persons are slight, they are clear-cut. Were it only for these sketches of our folk in the eighth century, the book ought to be more read than it

[1] I give here the passage which describes the youth of Guthlac, his sudden conversion, and his resolve to go into hermitage, and the description of his voyage. I have translated it from the Anglo-Saxon version that the English colour may be felt. The historical value of the extract as a picture of the character of a young Englishman is great, but its worth as a piece of good literature is the main reason for which I quote it. The original Latin of the eighth century is often florid, pompous, and rhetorical, but the conception and arrangement of the life is good. It represents work done more in the manner of Ealdhelm than of Baeda. The Anglo-Saxon rendering is probably of the tenth or eleventh century. It is agreeably written, with a natural and happy turn of phrase, and represents very well the kind of work which a simple-hearted monk of the new learning that started from Ælfred was capable of producing. The extracts then have the advantage of displaying something of the literary quality of two different centuries separated by perhaps two hundred years. But the events of the life described are of the eighth century.

"When his strength waxed and he grew to manhood, he minded him of the strong deeds of the heroes and men of yore. Then, as though he had woke from sleep, his mood was changed, and he got together a mickle troop and host of his comrades and himself took to weapons. Then he wreaked his grudges on his foes and burnt up their Burh, and ravaged their towns, and far and wide he made a manifold slaughter, and slew and took from men their goods. . . . For nine winters he carried on these raids, but it happened one night, on coming back from an outfaring, as he rested his weary limbs, that he thought over many things in his mind, and he was suddenly moved with the awe of God and his heart was filled within with ghostly love; and when he awoke, he thought on the old kings that were of yore who, through mindfulness of wretched death and the sore outgoing of a sinful life, forsook the world, and he saw of a sudden vanish away all the great wealth they had, and his own life hasten and hurry to an end, and he vowed to God that he would be his servant, and arising when it was day signed himself with the sign of Christ's rood." So he joined the monastery of Hrypadun, but after two years longed for the wilderness and a hermitage, and departing, heard of a vast desolation and was minded to dwell therein. The description of it is a clear picture of the watery places where Crowland grew into its later splendour. "There is in Britain a fen of unmeasured mickleness that begins from the river Granta, not far from the city which is called Grantaceaster. There stretch out unmeasured marshes, now a swart waterpool, now foul running streams, and eke many islands and reeds, and hillocks, and thickets, and with manifold windings, wide and long, it spreads out up to the northern sea."

is. It illustrates also the tender and colour-full imagination with regard to the supernatural, of which Baeda is so full. "At Guthlac's birth"—and I quote from the Anglo-Saxon version of the Latin—"men saw a hand of the fairest red hue coming out of the heavens, and it held a golden rood, and showed itself clear to many men, and bent forwards towards the door of the house wherein the child was born." Again, when the evil spirits have borne Guthlac to the very doors of hell and would fain push him in, the Apostle Bartholomew comes down to help him: "Then suddenly came down the indweller of heaven, the holy Apostle, with heavenly brightness and glory shining, amidst the dim darkness of swart hell; and the accursed ghosts could not abide there for the fairness of the holy Comer, and hid themselves in the darkness. But when Guthlac saw his faithful friend, he was very blithe with ghostly bliss and heavenly delight." Then at the command of the Apostle, the devils bear Guthlac back to his hermitage with gentleness. "So they brought him back with all mildness, and on their wings they bore him that he could not have been borne more pleasantly in a ship. Now, when they came in the midst of the highness of the lift, there came towards him a heap of holy spirits, and they all sang and said, '*Ibunt de virtute in virtutem,*' *et reliqua*—that is, in English—'Holy men shall go from strength to strength.' When it began to dawn they set him down, and as he was about to fulfil his morning-prayer-tide to God, he saw two of the cursed spirits weeping and wailing greatly, and when he asked why, they answered, 'We two weep because our power is all broken through thee' . . . and they went off as smoke before his face." Picture after picture; there is a savour of Dante in it!

The love of animals also appears, that frequent virtue of the mediæval saint, out of which has grown so much charming literature. The ravens of the fen are at his command, and the fishes and the wild beasts. When Wilfrith, his friend, was talking to him of the spiritual life, two swallows came suddenly flying in, and behold they upraised their song rejoicingly, and after that, perched without fear on the shoulders of the holy man, and again uplifted their song and often lit on his breast and arms and knees. Now when Wilfrith, long wondering, beheld the birds, he asked why the fowls of the wild waste sat on him and were so tame. And Guthlac said, "Hast thou never learnt, brother Wilfrith, in holy writ, that the wild deer and the wild birds were the nearer to him who hath led his life after the will of God?"

In the place where Guthlac had lived, Crowland drew the patronage of Æthelbald and after him of Offa, who, beginning his reign (757) over Mercia in some obscurity, had become, before his death in 796, the greatest king that England had as yet seen; but whose power went out, after his death, like a dying candle. We might imagine that this great prince whose charters are "more numerous than those of any other king of his age," who was the friend of learned persons like Alcuin, who had relations of close correspondence with the court of Charles at a time when Charles was patronising and advancing learning, would have created around him some kind of literature. This is so natural a conjecture that some persons have either asserted or suggested it. Professor Earle conjectures that Hygberht, the sole Archbishop of Lichfield, whom Offa set up as a rival of Canterbury, was the writer of the existing poem of *Beowulf*. Others

seem to suggest that Cynewulf was a Mercian or of a Mercian school. But there is no evidence of any literary school, capable of producing poems like *Beowulf* and the *Elene*, in the court or kingdom of Offa. The fabulous tales, however, which had collected round the ancient hero of the continental England, round Offa the son of Wermund—tales which were part of a legend common to England and Scandinavia—were mixed up with Offa of Mercia. They make him thus one of the subjects of literature, but they obscure all his early history. His life was a life of wars and eager policy. His patronage of the Church was for his own ends, and St. Albans was founded by him as a make-weight against an immoral life which had, by the evil example it gave, a bad effect on the monasteries and therefore upon their learning. At his death Mercia lost all power, and in 828 it was swallowed up by Ecgberht. Not many years after Ecgberht's death, the whole of Mercia was fought over by the heathen. All the monasteries perished; learning and the materials of learning were for the most part destroyed. Middle as well as Southern England was drowned in ignorance.[1] Yet we must not forget that the popular lays, the ballads, and the war-songs still continued. The wandering minstrel still went from hamlet to hamlet; the Scôp still made his verses in the camp, and the legend which tells how Ælfred sang to the harp in the tents of his foes, tells us that when the Muse has been driven from the seats of learning, she finds a shelter among the people.

[1] The western part of Mercia was not, however, harried so mercilessly as the rest of it. There seems to have lingered there some of the means for building up, when peace came, a new home for learning. In 873 Werfrith was made Bishop of Worcester, and he seems to have been able to establish a school in that city, and to develop it after the peace of Wedmore. But this, and the help he gave to Ælfred, does not belong to the present history.

CHAPTER XIV

LITERATURE IN NORTHUMBRIA

It was in Northumbria that English literature, as distinguished from Latin literature in England, arose, and it reached in that northern land a remarkable and varied development. It was also in the same region that Latin learning and literature, written by English folk, attained its highest excellence. The English literature began with Caedmon of Whitby, and he created, as we hear from Baeda, a school of poetry, and this is one of the earliest vernacular literatures of which we know in modern Europe. The Latin literature is fully represented by the work of Baeda, and his work was the greatest done in Europe at the time, and may be said to be the foundation or impulse of all mediæval learning. Thus in the seventh century, in our own land, the dance of the modern Muses began. Those of them who recited their thoughts in the Latin tongue—the Muse of History and of divine Philosophy—ceased in England after a brief period their noble speech, but found their voice afresh, when many centuries had passed, in our native tongue. Those who sang in English, the Muses of Poetry—of epic, tragic and lyric strains,—sang for too short a time in the ears of all, then also ceased or seemed to cease in England.

Their song was still heard, but only on the lips of warriors and wandering bards, in camp and village. Lowlier and lowlier was its sound, but its hour came at last. Again the Muses took up the English lyre for all the world to hear, and their first strains were coincident with the time of the Great Charter. As the people grew in freedom and in power so swelled the Muses' voice, ever louder and sweeter and in more varied music, from century to century, until the present hour.

It is the beginning of this poetic life in our own England which we have now to consider. Its early life in Northumbria lasted not much more than a century, from about 670 to about the year 800. The poetry is remarkable for two things which do not generally characterise the earlier efforts of song—for a comparative excellence and for variety of range. The excellence is only comparative: we get more art in the poetry than we expect, more originality, more happy surprises, more personal feeling well expressed than we should imagine possible in the childhood of a literature; but when we look at the poetry by itself alone, it is not, with a few exceptions, of a high class. When we consider its variety of range, we can speak with a less uncertain tone. From this point of view it deserves high attention. During the short time it lasted, it tried and touched, as if driven to extend its swelling life in all directions, a great number of different modes of poetry. All we have of it is contained in the MS. of *Beowulf*; in two books, one kept at Exeter and another found at Vercelli; in the *Chronicle* and in a few other MSS. They are all of no great length: a man might read them through in a few days, but in their narrow space there is an astonish-

ing variety,—and variety of methods and subjects prove a keen individuality and an eager life in the poets of a people. *Beowulf* took its shape, at least so I believe, in Northumbria, and *Beowulf* has some relation to an epic. The three books of *Judith* that remain to us out of twelve are, like an epic poem, freely invented and imaginatively developed from existing legends. Out of the paraphrasing of the Bible which Caedmon began, arose a narrative poetry which treated episodes of the Bible as if they were lays in a Saga. Hymns, songs of praise and prayer were certainly written by Caedmon, as well as poetic narrative. The religious lyric was born. If we should dare to impute to Caedmon or his school the long episode of the Fall in the *Genesis*, or the *Exodus*, or the series of cantatas on the life and triumph of Jesus over Satan, we should be able to refer to Northumbria three other types of poetry; and for my part, I hold that these, however later than Caedmon the critics may put them, were written under the influence, the close influence, of the Northumbrian Master. This poetry is also full of a dramatic manner, and this manner grew in Northumbria. The story in the more ancient Caedmonic poems and in the *Judith* is often told in dramatic conversations. The *Christ* of Cynewulf possesses long passages which might be sung at a miracle play.

Nor does this exhaust the range of Northumbrian song. The *Riddles*, of which there are a gathering of eighty-nine, are full, as we have seen, of the poetry of natural description, of nature almost loved for her own sake. Biographies, such as Guthlac's, were also made into poetry, and adorned by pleasant flowers of rhetoric. The wild legends of the saints, as

of *St. Andrew*, were taken up, and woven into supernatural stories; and a Saga subject, like that of the "Invention of the True Cross," was seized, and treated in part like a heathen tale of war and adventure. Allegorical poems, already touched with mediæval mysticism, such as the *Phœnix*, the *Panther*, and the *Whale*, engaged, in an hour of leisure, the poet's hand. An extraordinarily personal poem, of passionate religious autobiography, is founded on a dream of the Holy Rood; and there exists a long threefold poem by Cynewulf, in boldly connected divisions, on the whole of the mission and work of Jesus, which passes through the Incarnation and the Ascension, till it embodies, and with an original and noble treatment, the great subject of the Last Judgment. In the midst of these there are poems concerning the works and fates of men and collections of sententious verses which tell of the proverbial wisdom of men, of their sorrows and their religion; and lastly, there are four elegies, two of which are of excellent quality.

This is a remarkable range of poetic methods, contained in a small space, and it is, for its time, unique. It presents to us a curious problem. How did it happen that this native poetry—poetry other than the war-song which was universal—arose in Northumbria, and took there so wide and so imaginative a range? What were the elements which nursed this vernacular growth, and did not exist, so far as we know, elsewhere than in Northumbria?[1] The reasons

[1] I assume that there was no early West Saxon or Mercian poetry of this excellent and varied kind, and I think one has the right to assume it. It may be said that there was such poetry in Wessex during the seventh century, and we have lost it. It is possible, but then I think we should have had some allusion to it made by Baeda, Ealdhelm, Ælfred, or his biographers. At any rate, we know nothing about such poetry, and our question remains. How did it happen that English verse *began* in Northumbria? The question becomes

for such a flowering of song ought to be found in the years preceding 670-700. Those that I here suggest can scarcely be called more than conjectures, but at least they place before the mind the question which any historian of Anglo-Saxon literature ought to consider one of the most important questions he has to ask himself.

The first of these elements is the early greatness of Northumbria, and the influence its tradition of national splendour had on the minds of men. The pride of country which this awakens has always been an impulse to poetry. The finest poetic times of England are coincident with the sense of national greatness and unity, which, following on an era of splendour, uplifts the people to a high level of constant passion. This was the case in the days of Edward III.; it was still more the case in the time of Elizabeth; it has been the case in our own century. Nor is the outburst of song, which began with Burns, Wordsworth, and Coleridge, and died out with Keats, apart from this experience, though it may seem so. It was not a special national glory which then fired the poets, but the glory of the whole of the Nation of Humanity which seemed to their minds to rise suddenly into splendour and unity and brotherhood, and to be filled with immortal hopes. In such times the

more important, if, as I think, Cynewulf and his school, who carried on the work begun by Caedmon, were also Northumbrian, and if *Beowulf*, as I also believe, was thrown into its present form in Northumbria. But these beliefs are as yet open to discussion. What we can say, in general, is that we know there was a school of vernacular poetry in the north during the latter half of the seventh and the beginning of the eighth century; that we do not know of such a school at this date in the middle or the south of England, and that it is much more probable that poetry should be further developed where it has already existed, than in a country like Mercia where we never hear of poetry, or in a country like Wessex where we only hear of Ealdhelm making a light song or two for singing in the streets. At present the question is, Why did poetry in the *seventh* century arise in Northumbria?

past sends its impulse into the present and excites it; the present is full of its own eagerness and joy; and the future seems to thrill with expectation. Poetry is then born or if not actually born, the nation is then pregnant with it; and in the times of peace which follow this national triumph the child opens its eyes to the light.

Such conditions prevailed in Northumbria in the seventh century. Æthelfrith, who reigned from 593 to 617, raised his country to great honour; and his victory at Chester secured the supremacy of the English in the North. He was followed by his brother-in-law, Eadwine, whose supremacy was established far beyond Northumbria. Almost the whole of England owned his sway, and every Northumbrian must have felt the pride of country. Then he set up his capital at York, and a touch of the greatness of Rome, for York was the capital of Roman Britain, was linked to his name. This new splendour was imaged in the standard of purple embroidered with gold and in the Roman tufa, the feather tuft on the spear, which were borne before him on his journeys. Added to these things was the profound peace which Eadwine established, and the good government which filled the peace. So widespread was justice that the tradition ran and lasted that a woman with her babe might walk scatheless from sea to sea. When he died then in 633 the sense of national splendour, peace, unity, and overlordship was keen in the heart of every Northumbrian, and it lasted for more than a century. Oswald, his successor, strengthened this impression. He, too, was overlord of the greater part of England, and he became also a centre of that spiritual glory which saintship shed around him in his people's eyes.

He stood side by side, among his thegns, with Aidan the Apostle of Northumbria, interpreting the message of Christ. Legend made sacred his memory; a lovely story tells that the hand which gave to the poor remained for ever undecayed; a pillar of light rose to heaven from his body; a miracle found his body. So eager was the Christianity of Northumbria under Oswald that a great part of England was evangelised by the King's missionaries; and his name still abides in many churches. Thus to the political splendour and leadership of Northumbria was now added a spiritual splendour. Oswin, his successor in Deira, was as closely linked to Aidan as Oswald; and when Oswiu, King of Bernicia, slew Oswin, and made Northumbria one again, the political splendour was more than maintained by this great King. Nor was the spiritual glory less. The last heathen King of Mercia, Penda who had made the North tremble, fell before Oswiu, and Mercia became altogether Christian under his missionary bishop Ceadda. In his reign also the breach between Rome and the North was healed. The Synod of Whitby (664) added all the emotional influence of Rome as the great mother of the Christian world and the power which went back to the apostles, to the spiritual grounds of literature; and this was followed by the ecclesiastical unity of the whole of England. This was done from the south, but Northumbria might fairly say, *quorum pars magna fui*. With Ecgfrith, Oswiu's successor, the spiritual and political splendour of Northumbria still lasted. His great friendship with Cuthbert kept alive in the large number of monasteries which were now spreading learning and civilisation far and wide the sense that the spiritual nobility of Northumbria was as great as its political splendour.

It is true that when Ecgfrith fell on the murky day of Nechtansmere the warlike supremacy of Northumbria over England also fell, but this was for a time an advantage rather than a disadvantage to Northumbria. The internal condition of the country had been sorely altered for the worse by the incessant wars of Ecgfrith. Aldfrith, his successor, was a lover of peace and, concentrating Northumbria within her own borders, developed the kingdom. Within those borders her greatness and happiness still endured. Her lordship over others was lost; her lordship over herself was not lessened. Peace, while it is so close to warlike glory as still to be thrilled with its excitement, begets new literature, and Aldfrith himself was the image of the literary excitement which the political and religious splendour of Northumbria awakened and supported in the minds of men. Ecclesiastical purity had begun to decay at his death (705), and he had lost some of his dominions at the hand of the Picts, and both these circumstances diminished the glory of his kingdom. But literature still lived on, even through the weak and immoral reigns of Osred, Coenred, and Osric. Ceolwulf, Baeda's friend, succeeded them, and when he came to the throne in 729, the ancient glory again shone brightly, but briefly, before it was finally quenched in anarchy. We see, in the prologue and epilogue of the *Ecclesiastical History*, and in the special care which Baeda bestowed on the history of his own province, how much the sense of Northumbria's greatness influenced her chief writer. Long after Ceolwulf's death, when the land had fallen into ruinous disorder, the memory of her glory still lasted like a slumbering fire in the hearts of men, and produced a poetry of regret for the passing away of

that which once had been so great, tinged, as it were, with the beauty of the dying sun. Much of the poetry of Cynewulf preserves this melancholy charm.

This, then, I suggest, was one of the elements which caused a native poetry to rise in Northumbria. But this would not, without an additional consideration, do much to explain the problem. Mercia, it might be said, had its splendid time, and so had Wessex, but they produced no English verse with which we are acquainted. One reason they did not, was that when their years of glory came, Roman letters had seized on England, and the influence of Rome was to make Latin alone the tongue of learning and art. But this was not the case at the beginning of the Northumbrian supremacy. It might have been the case had Paullinus stayed in the North. But this Roman monk fled at Eadwine's death (633). Had he established a Latin Christianity and a Latin learning, it is probable we should have had no vernacular Christian poetry. All who were emotionalised by Northumbria's political and religious greatness would have expressed their emotion on their own subjects in Latin verse, or not have cared to preserve any English verse.[1] But, fortunately, at the beginnings of Christian and patriotic emotion in Northumbria, Rome was almost unrepresented, and Christianity was established in the North by Irish missionaries—that is, by men who, feeling the passion of nationality strongly and in opposition to the denationalising literature of Rome, were in the habit of

[1] Of course I do not mean that the early Northumbrian poets wrote poems on the glory of Northumbria, but that the whole nation being excited, and with them the poets, on this point, the poets could not help writing on their own subjects under the sway of the national emotion. Heated, they used that heat on matters other than the original source of their heat.

using their own language for poetry, not only on warlike subjects (on which every nation speaks in its own tongue), but also on all sentimental, imaginative, and religious subjects. This habit became, I suggest, the habit also of Northumbria. I do not think that it even occurred to the Northumbrian monk, trained by Aidan and his followers, to write his sacred poetry in Latin. Baeda, who was of the Latin school, did write his poetry in Latin verse. But he also loved English verse, and even wrote it. He was so far influenced by the national feeling for English. But his practice illustrates what would have happened if all the monasteries had been, like Jarrow, linked to Rome. We should have had no English school of poetry. As it was, there were many laymen writing English verse, and the monk in a monastery founded by the Irish wrote as naturally in English as an Iona monk would write in Irish. Not only did Caedmon, about fifteen years before the death of Ecgfrith, sing the creation of the world and the Redemption in English, but it seemed natural and best to the heads of his monastery to encourage him in this vernacular verse.[1] It was just this fortunate turn, this happy temper in the heads of Whitby—a temper which was the product, I think, of their Irish instead of their Roman training—which nourished Christian poetry in

[1] He could not, probably, have sung it in Latin, and this was also a piece of good luck ; but the point here is that the heads of his house were delighted with this English versing of sacred subjects, thought it inspired, and encouraged the poet to develop his powers in English. This would not, I think, have been the case at Canterbury under Theodore, or at Malmesbury under Ealdhelm. They, gripped by the Latin convention, would have looked coldly on English verse on solemn subjects written by one who was not a scholar. Ealdhelm, for example, did not, as far as we know, write on grave Christian themes in English verse. His songs on the bridge, of which the story speaks, seem to have been *carmina trivialia*. The Northumbrian scholar, on the contrary, trained by the Irish, preferred to voice his religious emotions in his own tongue.

English. The impulse, once given, continued. Honour, even a divine origin, was given to vernacular verse. Scholars like Baeda admired and loved it, princes and nobles adopted and supported it. When, then, the influence of Roman learning came in literary form to the North with the writings of Ealdhelm, it was, fortunately, too late for Rome to Latinise poetry—a vernacular poetry had been established. In one word, the flight of Paullinus, which meant the flight of Latin as the tongue of literature, enabled an English poetry to develop itself.

It is also probable that the Irish school who had evangelised the North felt that there would be a struggle between them and Rome for supremacy, and feared with good reason that they would be beaten. Their tendency then would be to encourage English as a vehicle for religious poetry rather than Latin. The struggle did take place, and Rome won the battle. But, again, the victory was not finally gained till a vernacular poetry had begun. The Synod of Whitby, though it settled the Easter quarrel on the side of Rome, did not prevent the enthusiastic reception of English poetry, six years afterwards, by the very persons who had attended the Synod, and in the very place where it was held. Even the coming of Theodore to Northumbria in 678 and 684, and the overthrow of the dominance of Irish influence, did not replace English by Latin as the vehicle of poetry, then or afterwards. Between these visits of Theodore, Caedmon had fixed poetry into English; the whole country—kings, nobles, people—had become accustomed to a national poetry in the tongue of the nation. Having begun, it went on. The beginning is half the deed in literature.

There is yet another probable reason for the prevalence of a Christian poetry in English. The kings, and no doubt the nobles of the seventh century, were close friends of the missionaries from Iona, and many of them were brought up at Iona. They would not be likely to care exclusively for Rome nor for Latin learning, and whatever influence they had would more tend to support English than Latin poetry. Moreover, Oswald, going about with Aidan on his missionary journeys, and translating to his nobles and thegns Aidan's preaching into English,[1] would be as much interested in English as a means of sacred teaching of the people as Ælfred afterwards became in the South; and had Caedmon risen in his time would have rejoiced in his English poetry. Oswin was as much bound up with Aidan as Oswald. Oswiu was baptized and educated in Iona, and would have, during the earlier part of his reign, the same interest in English as a sacred literary tongue as his predecessors. This conjecture is, however, founded on but slender evidence. There is much plainer evidence to show that the Northumbrian kings in the seventh century were suspicious that the spiritual power of Rome might tend to denationalise Northumbria. If this be the case, they would encourage an English rather than a Latin literature, when such a literature had once begun. Wessex and Mercia also in later days stood out against the claim of Rome to sit above the national feeling; but when this struggle of theirs arose Latin was already

[1] "It was the most charming of sights," says Baeda, "to see the King interpreting to his thegns and chiefs the discourses of Aidan who as yet spoke imperfectly the tongue of the Angles, for in his long exile the king had thoroughly learned the language of the Scots."—*Eccles. Hist.* Bk. iii.

the tongue of literature. But, at this time in Northumbria, Latin was not the tongue of literature. When Christian poetry began it began in English. Having begun, the kings and nobles whose policy it was to keep up the separate nationality of Northumbria would support it as one of the elements which strengthened national feeling.

It is possible to put this conjecture into a connection with known events. To establish Latin as the only tongue of sacred literature would be a part of the struggle which Rome made. It seems to me very probable that Wilfrid, who was at the head of the Roman party, would make that a part of his programme, and, if so, English, as the tongue of sacred poetry, would be in danger at his hands. His effort to romanise the Church was at first supported by many high-placed Northumbrians, by Alchfrith, Eanfleda, and others. For some years he was apparent master of the Northumbrian Church. The great monastic foundations of Hexham and Ripon may be said to have been his. A multitude of monks obeyed him ; kings and nobles sent their children to be brought up by him. In splendour of expenditure and in show he rivalled Ecgfrith himself, and could he have kept his temper, and behaved with less desire of power, with less intrigue, he might have got the Northumbrian kings and monasteries into his hands and the English seed of literature might never have grown into a tree. This danger may have been increased by the fact that his great friend, Benedict Biscop, had now made Wearmouth and Jarrow a centre of Roman literature and art. It was then of importance, I conjecture, for the prevalence of English as the tongue of poetic literature that Wilfrid's ascendancy should

suffer. His pride, perhaps his interference with Ecgfrith's domestic relations and his quarrel with Theodore drove him from the country. It may have been owing to this quarrel that Theodore, while determined to bring Northumbria under the ecclesiastical order of Rome, was not intolerant of the Celtic or the national elements in Northumbria, and set over the new Sees into which he divided Northumbria bishops who had been brought up in Celtic monasteries—Eata[1] at Hexham, Bosa at York, while Cuthbert was settled at Lindisfarne. On all sides the encroaching and intolerant influence of Wilfrid was set aside, and the trouble he caused in Church and court may have been one reason why the Northumbrian princes became more and more determined to keep their national individuality clear of Rome. One result of all this would be that English poetry would escape from being crushed out by Latin verse. Even Ecgfrith, while submitting to Theodore, kept the Church in Northumbria national, and supported, especially by his friendship for Cuthbert, the distinctly English school of monks, who, though they had yielded to Rome, retained their individual ways of thinking. We might even see in the fate which caused Ecgfrith to be buried at Iona a parable of this lingering Celtic influence.

Aldfrith, who succeeded him, equally supported the nationality of the Northumbrian Church; and his education at Iona, and partly, it is said, in Ireland, as well as his training as Ealdhelm's fellow-pupil,

[1] Eata was one of the twelve Northumbrian boys whom Aidan trained at Lindisfarne. Ceadda or Chad was another; and Theodore, after deposing him at York, made him Bishop of Lichfield. Bosa was brought up by Hilda, and Cuthbert was, of course, brought up among the Celtic missionaries. There was then a parenthesis in Northumbria during which the Celtic influence was mixed on equal terms with the Latin. It was during this parenthesis that English poetry gathered strength and fixed itself.

made him much more cosmopolitan in learning than Rome may have wished him to be. At one with Theodore's policy of comprehension, he had also strong Celtic sympathies. I imagine that he was all the more Northumbrian because Irish and Latin elements were mixed in him. Between the individualism of the Celt and the collectivism of the Roman, he found a middle point in a strong Northumbrianism. We may be certain then that a national English poetry, especially Northumbrian, found favour in his eyes ; and indeed at his death in 705 the whole of Caedmon's work was afloat in Northumbria ; those who formed themselves upon Caedmon had established a school of English sacred poetry, and another school had begun, not only of sacred but of profane poetry.

These are the reasons why I think that English had in Northumbria a chance as the tongue of poetry which it had not elsewhere, and why, having begun at Whitby about 670, it continued, in spite of the rapid and parallel growth of Latin literature. The school of Theodore and Ealdhelm did not encourage English poetry to develop itself. The school of Baeda and of York continue to admire and support English poetry sixty years after its beginning. The contrast is remarkable. We now turn to a different matter. What were the influences which bore on Northumbria and not on Mercia and Wessex, and which tended to make Northumbria a more fruitful soil for poetry than Wessex or Mercia? We are driven here, as before, to suggestions which may or may not be of value.

The first suggestion is that the geographical position of Northumbria brought it into connection with a greater mixture of races than was the case elsewhere.

The whole of Cumbria or Strathclyde lay on the west and north-west of it, and in Cumbria there was a mixed population; of the Irish who drifted down into it from the North beyond the Clyde, of the Picts who lived in Galloway, and of its own Welsh indwellers, all three speaking different dialects of the same tongue, and in conversation more or less comprehending one another.[1] Each of these *nations*, if I use Baeda's term which does not carry our meaning of the word,[2] had their own poetry, both warlike and Christian. Even the Picts in the North had, in the seventh century, received enough of Christianity from Columba to have sacred song among them in their own tongue, and in Aldfrith's time the learned men of the Pictish king's court translated Ceolfrid's letter about Easter into their own literary language. The Northumbrian tongue came into contact, both in war and peace, with these peoples,—with the Welsh of Strathclyde, with the Irish of Dalriada, even with the Pictish Gaels. During the various periods when they lived under the overlordship of the Northumbrian kings of the seventh century, intermarriages probably took place, and, on the borders at least, something resembling a common language arose, I conjecture, between the English and these peoples. Moreover, under Eadwine,

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[1] Columba conversed freely with the Picts from king to peasant without any difficulty. It was only when he preached that he was forced to use an interpreter. So says Adamnan in the seventh century. (See also, *Four Ancient Books of Wales*, Skene, p. 137, vol. 1.) It does not follow, however, that the Welsh language of Cumbria was understood as easily by Picts or Irish, except on the marches.

[2] Baeda says of Oswald, "Denique omnes nationes et provincias Britanniae, quae in quatuor linguas, id est Brittonum, Pictorum, Scottorum, et Anglorum, divisae sunt, in ditione accepit." All these folks at the time of Baeda, "cultivated, each in its own dialect, the sublime study of Divine truth, and Latin, by the study of the sacred Scriptures, had become common to them" (*Eccles. Hist.* ch. i.) It is plain that there was an interchange among them of their religious thoughts, perhaps even of their literature.

the British kingdom of Elmet was subdued, and we have no proof that the inhabitants were wholly driven away. All this contact of the Northumbrians with these varied races, or with various growths of the same original stock, had already begun at the beginning of the seventh century, before, let us say, the death of Eadwine in 633, and, after that time, it continued and increased. Intercourse with the Welsh existed in other parts of England, but it was greater in Northumbria than elsewhere. Intercourse with the Irish existed also in parts of England, but it was only between wandering Irish scholars and English scholars. In Northumbria it was more constant, and of an Irish people with an English people. Intercourse with the Gael took place nowhere else in England, but in Northumbria it had gone so far that before Baeda died a Pictish king sent for architects to England, and was in direct communication with the monastery of Wearmouth. This interchange of the thought and oral literature, accompanied by the occasional intermarriage, of English and Welsh and Irish and Picts was, I think, one of the causes of a greater capacity in Northumbria for producing good poetry than was likely to exist in other parts of England, where the foreigners affected the English stock only on the western edges of Mercia and of Wessex.

One more suggestion I may make in this connection. If Mr. Skene and others be right in their conjecture that in the fifth century some of the continental English had settled south of the Forth, this mixture of the English, Welsh, and, it may be, of the Picts north of the Forth had here already taken place, and Eadwine, when he drove his way to the Forth, came into touch with the descendants of an English tribe

who had added to their own oral poetry the poetry of the Gael and the Welsh. This old English stock would harmonise in time with the Angles, and bring them into closer touch with the foreigners and their literature.

We have good grounds for thinking that such a literature did exist among the Cumbrian Welsh at this time. The scenery and events of some of the historical poems in the *Four Ancient Books of Wales* lie, Mr. Skene says, in the north ; the poems are due to Welsh bards of the North, and are older than the tenth century. They are, in fact, the literature of the dwellers in Cumbria, before the subjugation of Strathclyde in 946. He supposes then that the wars of the Britons against the Picts and Scots, and then against the Angles of Bernicia, produced a body of Welsh popular poetry, which was brought into shape in the seventh century (the century we are dealing with), and that the earliest consistent shape of the historical poems we have was of that century.[1] This took place in the reign of Cadwallon, during his brief success against the Angles. Even after his defeat, the national spirit, Skene supposes, was kept alive by these popular lays, and by prophetic strains as to the future of the Cymry. In later years, the

[1] During the sixth century the historical Arthur, according to Mr. Skene, fought against the Northern Saxons, who had settled in the district of the Forth and Clyde, the most of his twelve battles, the last of which was in 516. Poems and lays were made of these battles, and took a legendary shape in the seventh century. Taliessin, Aneurin, Llywarch Hen and a fourth poet "simul uno tempore in poemate Britannico claruerunt." They flourished then in the sixth century. Ida died in 559, and other wars were waged against his sons. Skene also declares that the great poem of the *Godǫdin* describes the terrible slaughter which took place in the wars between Oswiu and Penda, when thirty British kings fought on the side of Penda against Northumbria. He mentions other poems made in the seventh century concerning other battles between the Scots and Welsh. There was a great body of poetry, then, already built up among the Northern Welsh. (See Skene, *Four Ancient Books of Wales.*) If this be true, the English have no right to claim in Caedmon the first vernacular poet.

emigration of the Cymry to Wales brought these poems down from the North to South Wales, where, in still later times, the Arthurian Romance was added to them from Armorica.[1] From the days of Ida, then (to say nothing of earlier poetry), lays of battle, of joy and sorrow, of fates and legends, were being sung all over the country where the Cymry and the Northumbrian-English fought to and fro with varying success, lived together in the days of peace, and learned one another's language;[2] and I maintain that this body of popular Welsh poetry, with its peculiar poetic sentiment—its passion, colour, pathos, and surprise—had some influence, and perhaps a powerful one, on the English of Northumbria, and all the more, if the races were mingled, here and there at least, in marriage.

It was not only, however, with the Welsh, but with the Irish also that the Northumbrians were mingled. The Scots, as the Irish were called, had, in the fourth century, made a settlement in our *Scotland*, but returned to Ireland. Later on they came back and established themselves in the year 503 in Dalriada (Argyll). The first time we find them of importance in history is

[1] *Four Ancient Books of Wales*, chs. xiii. xiv.

[2] The contact of the two races, both in war and peace, was continuous from the middle of the sixth century, and in war, as well as in peace, conterminous peoples learn to understand one another. Four kings of the North are described by the author of the *Genealogia* as warring against Hussa, son of Ida, King of Bernicia, who reigned from 567 to 574. Again against Theodric, who reigned over Bernicia from 580 to 587, and was also a son of Ida, Urien with his sons fought valiantly, and with varying fortune. It was these wars, Skene thinks, which were celebrated by Aneurin. In 603 the Scots and Welsh united to crush Bernicia, but Æthelfrith met them at Dawston in Liddesdale, and almost destroyed the whole army. It was after this, and owing to it, that Eadwine pushed his power up to the shores of the Firth of Forth. Oswald and Oswiu drove their conquests farther, and were overlords of Strathclyde. Ecgfrith continued this overlordship and subdued Cumberland, North Lancashire and Galloway. He increased then the Welsh admixture till he fell at Nechtansmere in 685. For nearly a hundred years then, we may say that there was a mingling in war and peace of the Cymry and the English, sufficient, at least, to enable the bards of both peoples to interchange their poetry.

under Aedan, whom Columba crowned as King of Dalriada in Iona, and who, in 603, led the whole of the Celtic forces of the country against Æthelfrith. There is no need here to follow the fortunes of the Scot-kingdom. It was not till the middle of the ninth century that it took the lead again in the person of Kenneth MacAlpin; and not until fifty years afterwards that Pictland became Scotland.

The real Irish invasion which influenced English literature began with the landing of St. Columba in 563 on some islands off the west coast of Scotland, and his final choice of Hii, or Iona, for the site of a monastery, from which he evangelised the Picts of the mainland. He died in 597, the very year in which Augustine landed in the south of Britain, but he handed on to his followers his passionate and poetic temper. All those brought up in his monastery seem to have caught something of the mingled fire and tenderness of its founder,[1] and something also of his love for a free and wandering life; and the English who came for education to Iona, and those, too, who were taught in Northumbria their Christianity by missionaries from Iona, were influenced more or less deeply by the elements of Columba's character, especially those whose blood was at all mixed with Gaelic or Cymric families. Columba was, even in his faults, eminently Irish, and in no people, save the Jews, are race qualities so persistently

[1] These two elements united in Columba, and each tempering the other, were often divided in his spiritual descendants. The fire of Columba, without his tenderness, became fierceness in Corman, as he is called, who was so hard on the heathen Northumbrians that he returned to Iona; and somewhat petulant wrath in Colman, who, having lost his cause at Whitby, went back to Iona and then to Ireland. The tenderness of Columba was pre-eminent in Aidan, who also had eagerness enough. Both fire and gentleness were again united in Cuthbert, who of them all is most like Columba.

continued from generation to generation, and so powerful in admixture with other peoples, as they are in the Irish. In no people, also, is the descent of character, independent of the descent through blood, more close and masterful than it is among the Irish. If it had not been so in their history, if they had oftener broken the tradition, they had been a wiser and a better folk. Columba, however, handed down to his successors, through the mastery of his character, his loves, his likings, his temperament, his manner of life; and these, full of poetic and passionate feeling, were transferred to the English whom his monks evangelised. Cuthbert, who may have had Gael or Irish blood in him,[1] is a good example of the reproduction of Columba's manner of life and poetic feeling, of his love of solitude alternating with vagrant missions, but not of his power of versing or of his hot and passionate temper. Columba was himself a poet. Irish poems of his are believed to still exist, and if the song of regret for his exile from Ireland be really his, it makes it clear that he was a true lyrist. He loved well his own national poetry, and the story goes that one of the reasons of a certain visit he paid to Ireland was to defend the bardic order from a threatened exile from their country. We may be sure, then, that the love of poetry continued to be a tradition in the monastery, and the Irish poems of battle and law, and the great stories, like that of Lir and the children of Tuireann, were known and loved at Iona. Columba was not the man to throw away poetry which Baeda

[1] It is my contention, that all over the country we call the Lowlands and the Border, English were mixed with Pict and Scot and Cymry, and that a Teutonic people, when mixed, are more likely to have the poetic temperament than when unmixed. The legend that Cuthbert's mother was an Irish slave—a princess, of course—may possibly contain the fact that he was of mixed blood.

would, no doubt, have called profane. One of his greatest friends, Dallan Forgaill, who made a poem upon him, which is still preserved — the *Ambra Choluimcille,* Columba's Praises—was the chief of all the Irish bards. With all this poetry the English educated at Iona were likely to be acquainted.

Columba was equally fond of literary matters. His love for fine MSS. is said to have produced a civil war in Ireland; and the battle of the Psalter is still kept in mind by the shrine in which the Psalter is said to have been placed, and which is in the museum of the Royal Irish Academy. Not only, then, from Rome, but also from Iona, Northumbrian nobles learned to love a fine library. Aldfrith is much more likely to have derived his eagerness for collecting from Iona than from Wearmouth.

The passion for wandering at will, which carried the Irish missionaries over Europe, and which was reproduced in the Northumbrian pupils of Aidan; the love of country and the pathos of exile; the affection for animals, as if they were human beings, but needing more pity than men and women, were, all three, deep in the character of Columba, and are all represented in Anglo-Saxon poetry. The first is as much Teutonic as Celtic, but among the Teuton tribes it is more the characteristic of warriors than of monks. It was, however, a special mark of the Irish evangelisation of Northumbria; and the wandering gipsy life that Aidan and Cedda and Ceadda and Cuthbert led, roving, as fancy led them, from hamlet to hamlet over the wild country, was much more provocative of a poetic way of looking at nature and man than the systematic visitation of parishes, which the bishop, under the Roman rule, made of his diocese. The one was

directed by impulse, the other by rule. The one was a life of adventure, the other was not.

The love of country and the passionate pain of exile belong also to all peoples, but they were felt by the Irish with peculiar intensity, certainly with far greater intensity than by the Teutonic tribes. I do not say that the frequent recurrence of this poetic subject in Northumbrian poetry was caused by the influence of the Irish, but I think that it was deepened and made more passionate by it.

The love of animals is a common element in monasticism, both Celtic and Roman, from Columba to Francis of Assisi. Pity, which lay at the root of the nature of Jesus, was extended to beasts and birds as well as men. This was not a special mark of the Teutonic genius under Christianity. It appears, but not often, in Northumbrian poetry. It has always been one of the marks, up to the present century, of English poetry in the North rather than of poetry in the South, and I venture to suggest that it grew among the Northumbrians and has continued in the Lowland poetry owing to the impulse, stronger and more poetic than elsewhere, which it received from Columba and his pupils, and which they handed on to the English whom they evangelised. The pretty legend which Adamnan tells of Columba and the Crane illustrates alike the passionate sorrow of exile and the love of animals of which I write, and the poetic intensity and charm with which the Celt surrounded them.

One morning Columba called to his side one of his monks, and said, "Go, seat yourself on the marge of the sea, on the western shore of our isle; and there you will see, coming from the north of Ireland, a voyaging crane, very weary and beaten by the storms,

which will fall at your feet upon the beach. Lift it up with pity and carry it to the neighbouring hut, nourish it for three days of rest, and when it is refreshed and strong again, it will care no more to stay with us in exile, but will fly back again to sweet Ireland, its dear country where it was born. I charge you thus with its care, for it comes from the land where I was born myself." So when the monk returned, having done as he was commanded, Columba said, "May God bless you, my son, since you have well cared for our exiled guest; you will see it return to its country in three days." And so it was. On the day named it rose from the earth, and when it had a moment sought its path through the sky, took its flight on a steady wing, straight for Ireland.

This temperament, combined with the emotions of Christianity, and acting on hearts in the first glow of conversion, came into Northumbria, and came attended by all the prestige which a royal friendship gave to the Irish missionaries, and with the support of the king's family and thegns. Oswald, with twelve companions, had taken refuge at Iona in 617. All the twelve, among whom were his brothers, were baptized and educated there, and shared, as they grew older, in the manner of life and in all the interests of the Irish monastery. Oswald, during seventeen years, from the age of thirteen, was steeped in the spirit which Columba had left behind. He learned Irish, and it is fair to infer that he heard and perhaps loved the great Irish poems. All his twelve companions had the same opportunities, and as they belonged to the royal family,[1] Irish poetry was not unknown to the Æthelings of Nor-

[1] Seven of them, including Oswald, were sons of Æthelfrith.

thumbria. When Oswald, in 634, came to the throne, he summoned his friends at Iona to send him missionaries. Aidan was soon by his side, and as Bishop of Lindisfarne converted Bernicia to the Christian faith, and restored Deira to the Christianity it had abandoned during the one shameless year of Osric's reign. The whole of Northumbria was united in the Christian faith by Iona. This was the bloodless invasion of the English by the Irish nature, and though its outward power departed in 664, its inward power lasted long. Oswin in Deira, Oswiu, when he made Northumbria into one kingdom, carried on the Irish influence.[1] The latter great king had been baptized and educated at Iona, and his earlier reign was marked, especially after the battle of Winwaed, by an increasing union of the Northumbrians with Irish life, literature, and learning. As Oswald had set up Lindisfarne and its subject monasteries on the model of Iona, so Oswiu set up Whitby on the same model. Whitby became the great educational centre of the southern part of Northumbria, and from its root sprang a number of related monasteries, all more or less directed by men who had received an Irish training and carried with them some Irish literature. From point to point of the coast, from Dunbar to Coldingham on St. Abb's Head, through Lindisfarne to Whitby, the Celtic monasteries civilised the folkland inward from the seashore. Over the interior, and indeed down into those provinces below Northumbria which were evangelised by the bishops trained at Lindisfarne and Whitby, and by missionaries like Fursey from Ireland, the monasteries were chiefly set up with the religious customs of

[1] I am sorry to seem to tell the same story over again. But the connection is different, and the repetition, I think, necessary for clearness.

Iona. It is said that forty-four monasteries were founded by Irishmen in England. But I am here only speaking of Northumbria and of the seventh century. In that century, and chiefly before the death of Caedmon, these were the chief monasteries influenced or founded by the Irish Church.

The first was at *Lindisfarne*, where Aidan set up his Bishop's seat, close to Bamborough, the royal castle of Oswald. It was the mother-church of the North—"the Iona," as Montalembert calls it, "of the Angles." South of it at the mouth of the Tyne, arose, over the murdered body of Oswin, the double monastery of *Tynemouth*. The nuns who came to pray at his tomb arrived from *Whitby*, which had already been established at the mouth of the Esk by Hild; and some years after Oswiu's death, and at the place where he was slain, Oswiu's wife, Eanfleda, built a monastery at *Gilling*, near to Richmond in Yorkshire. Its abbot was Trumhere, an Angle, but educated and ordained, says Baeda, by the Scots. Before this time, and during the life of Aidan, *Hartlepool*, the first of the monasteries presided over by an abbess in Northumbria, occupied a site on the coast between Tynemouth and Whitby. Inland, between York and Whitby, the son of Oswald, desiring to found a monastery where he might pray and be buried, called Cedda from Lindisfarne to choose its site. Cedda chose it in the roughest and wildest place among the hills, and set up *Lastingham* in accordance with the customs of Lindisfarne. North of Lindisfarne, other Irish monasteries had grown up. *Old Melrose*, an annex of Lindisfarne where young missionaries were educated, was built on a jutting arm of rock, round which swept the Tweed, about a league away from the Melrose we know so well. Still farther

north, on a lonely cape in which the range of the Lammermuir ends, nearly five hundred feet above the sea, rose *Coldingham*, a double monastery. Ebba, sister of Oswald, was its founder; and Aidan's successor, Finan of Lindisfarne, consecrated her. She had previously founded another monastery, *Ebbchester*, on the Derwent.

These all belonged to the Irish family of Lindisfarne. The greater part of Northumbria learnt, through men whose spiritual centre was at Iona, the arts of life and industry, the reclaiming of the waste lands, agriculture, road and bridge making, the pleasures of social life, education, and literary culture, and learnt this new and exciting life through the Irish temper.[1] At the same time there was an incessant crossing and recrossing of Northumbrians to Ireland itself, and of Irish to Northumbria, for the purposes of learning and culture.

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[1] We must not, however, forget that the monastic power of the Roman Church was, after the first thirty years of Irish Christianity, growing up alongside of the Irish monasteries in the latter years of the seventh century. Northumbria was civilised by monks who derived their impulse from Rome as well as by monks who derived their impulse from Iona. Twenty-six years after Aidan took root at Lindisfarne, Ripon began the rivalry of the Latin with the Celtic monasticism. Its early history illustrates the struggle. It was founded by Alchfrith, son of Oswiu, and its first monks and its Abbot Eata came from the Irish monastery of Old Melrose. Alchfrith, under Wilfrid's influence, asked them in 661 to adopt the Roman mode of celebrating Easter. They refused and returned to Melrose. Wilfrid then took up the war which he carried to a successful issue at Whitby. He introduced the Benedictine rule at Ripon. Some years later he built, with great splendour, the Priory of Hexham, at the foot of the Roman wall, a little below the junction of the two branches of the Tyne, and not far from the place where Oswald planted the cross on the soil of Northumbria. Two other great monasteries were founded in the seventh century, and became, more than all the others, centres of learning. These were the united houses of *Wearmouth* and *Jarrow*, established close to the mouth of the Tyne by Benedict Biscop. Their chief glory, as nurseries of literature, belongs to the next century, but Wearmouth was founded when Caedmon was singing at Whitby, and Jarrow only two years after his death. These Latin monasteries lived on terms of mutual respect and tolerance with the Celtic. When the question of Easter was settled they remained in harmony, interchanging devotional thought and feeling. We must not forget this monastic mingling of Celtic and Latin influences in estimating the forces which, in the seventh century, started the literature of Northumbria.

The two countries drank in one another. The English found in Ireland a learning not to be found elsewhere in Europe. Not only religious, but literary and classic studies were pursued with eagerness, and developed. They kept historical annals in the monasteries. The arts were practised—architecture, graving, chiselling, embroidery, music, and poetry. Not only then from Iona, but also from Ireland itself, the Celtic influence poured into Northumbria in the seventh century.

It lessened, as we have seen, in the later years of Oswiu and under Ecgfrith; and after the Synod of Whitby it was doomed. When Aldfrith died in 705 we may say that the Irish influence, which had lasted in full power from the advent of Aidan to the Synod of Whitby, from 635 to 664, began to die. It still continued for forty years, till all who had been trained by Lindisfarne and Whitby had passed away. It ran a career, then, of about seventy years. During that time the Irish character, the passion, impulsiveness and tenderness of Columba; some at least of the Irish poetry, with its elements of colour, romance, invention, and charm, penetrated the Northumbrians, and we can scarcely avoid thinking that this was one of the causes which made Northumbria more creative of poetry than the rest of England, especially when we remember that the Celtic impulse came to the English charged with all the new emotions of Christianity.[1]

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[1] I place only in a note another conjecture which may have a little weight. We need to remember, in estimating the influences which bore upon Northumbria before Caedmon, that during the whole reign of Penda, from 626 to 655, a heathen influence poured into the Northern kingdom from Mercia and kept up, among those who clung to the old ways, the thoughts and customs and war-songs of the heathen forefathers of the English. It is probable that the Teutonic poetry was the better preserved in Northumbria from its having associated for a long time with Englishmen who remained Pagans after the Northumbrians had become Christian, and whom they themselves évangelised. Of course this suggestion would have but little value if there had not existed in

One other influence, creative of poetry, or fostering a poetic temper, was the natural scenery of Northumbria. It was of a wilder, more romantic type than any that existed below the Humber. The wood and wild-land of Mercia and Wessex, even the fens, or the great downs which looked on the Channel, are not to us so instinct with that natural mystery which troubles the imagination of those who make and love poetry as the lonely, rolling moors which stretch, desolate even to this day, from Cumberland to the Tweed in rig and flow. There is scarcely a valley in their deep recesses which has not its own personality, which does not make its own impression; and the rivers which are born in their mosses, and which cleave their way to the sea, are fierce and tawny as a tiger. The hills, becoming softer as they pass northward, make the view seen by one who stands on the ridge of the Roman wall, mysteriously wide and far, and the vast but low roof of sky which broods above them is fruitful of swirling mists, of wild sunsets, and wilder storms. This land has always been the home of rude and pathetic ballads of love and war and superstition; and in the seventh century there was not an inch of the ground which had not been fought over by Cymry and Angle, by Scots and Picts. Battle lays had been sung over it from Carlisle to Bamborough, monastic chants from Tynemouth to Lindisfarne and Coldingham; and Walter Scott, when he made the whole of it, and Liddesdale in particular, the native

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Northumbria a literary class who loved poetry, and who did not think that profane poetry of war, adventure, and legend was wrong for a Christian man to hear and sing. But such a class did exist, I think, in the Irish monks and in those trained by them. They had their own legends, lays, and adventures; and they would cherish lays similar to those out of which *Beowulf* was composed. They would not reduce them to writing, but they would sing them and keep them, and give them vogue.

land of romance, but revived that which had filled it more than a thousand years before. The impression the whole country made—with the ruined wall of the Romans, that "work of giants," added to create a new element of awe—must have stirred the poetic temperament in that mixed people. It stirs it now in us, and such impressions have no time.

But the actual poetry which we have in Caedmon, in the books of Exeter and Vercelli, and, perhaps, in *Beowulf* also, does not belong, I think, to the inland moorland, but to the coast. The sea, as I have already shown, is the one constant natural object in these poems; and a large number of the monastic centres of the seventh century were situated on the sea. Each sat on its promontory "stern and wild,"

> Meet nurse for a poetic child.

They looked alike on the solemn moorland and on the roaring sea. From Coldingham, from Lindisfarne, from Tynemouth and Whitby, the moors, divided by brown and rushing streams, stretched inland league after league, and filled with their mystery the hearts of Angle and of Scot. On the other side was their daily companion, the changing sea. The dwellers at Coldingham heard its fierce billows roar more than 400 feet below their gray and lofty cape. Who that has seen Tynemouth or Lindisfarne can ever forget the emotion of loneliness which filled him with the thought of God as he looked from the wild grass headlands over the barren deep? The wanderer, on the shore where Bamborough stretches forth its length on the dyke of basalt, sees the white waves leap over the isles of Farne, and feels as Cynewulf felt when he saw the rocks "unmoved abide the waves, the lightning, and the

hail." There is not a more savage coast in England than that which rises and dips from headland to valley—its jutting jaws of ship-devouring rock opening out to sea—as we voyage from Hartlepool to Whitby. All the nameless passion of the sea and the stormy sky, of the loud winds and the white horses of the deep, of the black clouds and the red lightning entered day by day into the life of those who watched the business and fury of the elements from the edges of the cliffs; and the watchers were men and women who had received the impress of the sea and its love, not only from their Teutonic forefathers, but from the Irish, whose tales are full of the great waters, and who were as much children of the billows as Beowulf and his men. The coracle was not to be compared in size and safety to a dragon ship, but it was handled with as great dexterity, and it needed greater sea audacity. Not only then from one side, but from two, the Northumbrians were prepared to receive the poetic impulse of the sea.

These are the suggestions which I make in answer to the question why poetry prevailed in Northumbria more than elsewhere in England; and, in making them, I have confined myself to the seventh century, that is, to the century in which Christian poetry was born in the soul of Caedmon, and sung on the cliff of Whitby.

Nearly all these influences bore on Caedmon and nourished his genius. That genius was silent for a long time; it was only when well on in years that he began to sing. But this was natural enough. The beginner of a new form of poetry in times which have no written literature and no models, is not likely to begin early. But all the more he drinks in for

years, into a soul which is naturally receptive, the impulses which come to him from human affairs and human nature, from circumstances, and from the natural world; and if we say that Caedmon was about fifty when he began to make verse, and choose 670 for the date of his first poem, he began to receive these impulses about the year 630, when he would be ten years old, and when Eadwine was still King. Where he was then living we cannot tell; but he was probably a heathen, for it was only in 627 that Eadwine was baptized. In 658 Hild set up the monastery at Whitby, and as Caedmon was a secular servant of the monastery, we may well conjecture that he belonged to the little fishing hamlet which lay at the foot of the cliff, or that he accompanied Hild as a retainer from Hartlepool. About the age of forty, the influences of which I speak began more directly to bear upon him. Hild, the Abbess of his home, was of the royal stock of Deira, and grand-niece of the great King Eadwine, by whose side, when she was a girl of thirteen, she was baptized by Paullinus. Many a time Caedmon must have heard that story told. Nor was this all that Caedmon heard of the glory of Eadwine, for on a certain day he may have seen the procession and heard the service which attended the reburial at Whitby of the body of Eadwine;[1] and this tomb made for a time Whitby the Westminster Abbey of Northumbria. He saw in 670 Oswiu laid low in the same church, and perhaps his wife Eanfleda. Over the tombs of these great princes shone into Caedmon's eyes the national glory of Northumbria. Still deeper was probably the

[1] Eadwine was slain in 633. His head was brought to York and buried there. His body was laid (Baeda, *H. E.* 24) at Whitby—when exactly I do not know, but perhaps at the same time when Oswiu was buried there in 670.

impression made by the continual presence of Ælfleda, whose life in the monastery was bound up with the great victory of Winwaed, when Penda the scourge of Northumbria was at last slain and Oswald avenged. The story of her dedication by her father Oswiu to Christ and her being given to Hild at Hartlepool, must have been told again and again to Caedmon. She was twenty years old when he began to write, and she listened to his first song. Nor was this all; Oswiu and the princes of Northumbria were frequently at Whitby, and with them may have come at one time or another Ecgfrith, who in 670 came to the throne of England when Caedmon ascended the throne of Poetry.

This was enough to fill his soul with the war-like glory of his country, but its spiritual glory also came upon him. His mistress had been baptized by Paullinus; he probably had seen Aidan face to face, for Aidan died only twenty years before Caedmon began to sing, and Aidan had been Hild's father in the Lord. Many were the monks and travellers who came to Whitby from Lindisfarne, and all the story of Oswald and Aidan's companionship in the evangelisation of Northumbria was doubtless common talk at Whitby. After 664 he may have seen the angel face of Cuthbert, the new Prior of Lindisfarne, who for twelve years, before his retirement to Farne, went on frequent missionary journeys through Northumbria, and whose death took place only seven years after the death of Caedmon. It is interesting to think that Cuthbert may have sung the verses of Caedmon. The school of the monastery of monks under Hild contained, while Caedmon was yet alive, five men who came to be bishops—Bosa to be Bishop of Deira, with his See at

York; Ætla, whom Baeda makes Bishop of Dorchester, and who is probably the same as Hedda, who fixed the West Saxon See at Winchester; Oftfor, the second Bishop of Worcester; John of Beverley, who brought to Whitby news of the new school of Canterbury and of Theodore and Hadrian; and Wilfrid II., who became Bishop of York; all of them, save the last, men of original thought and of power in affairs. At many points then the spiritual glory of Northumbria bore upon the daily life of Caedmon. There was one great event, moreover, which happened at Whitby while he was alive, in which the splendour of a great ceremony brought together the kingly race of Northumbria, the noble memories of the Celtic Church, and the intellectual power, the unity and the awe of Rome. It is almost certain that Caedmon saw the Synod of Whitby in 664. King Oswiu came there with his son Alchfrith, and his daughter Ælfleda came from the monastery to meet him. Colman of Lindisfarne with his Irish clerks, Hild and her people and the venerable Cedda represented the evangelisers of Northumbria. Wilfrid, with Agilberht Bishop of the West Saxons; Romanus, chaplain of Eanfleda Oswiu's wife; and James the Deacon, one of the companions of Paullinus, in whom men saw the image of the first Latin mission so sadly brought to misfortune thirty years before, represented the over-mastering power of Rome. It was a sight to be for ever remembered, even by a monastic servant whose genius was as yet unawakened; nor could any one who heard Wilfrid—and the Synod may have been held in the open air—speaking English "with a sweet, soft eloquence," forget the image of that keen and passionate partizan. These things would work even on a stupid soul; they

would certainly work on one in whom abode, though as yet in slumber, the spark of genius.

The mixture of races in Northumbria on which I have dwelt was not, I should think, personally represented in Caedmon. It is not likely that the family of one who lived in the midst of the east coast of Deira had anything to do with Cymry or Pict or Irish. But, of course, the whole influence of the Irish spirit, thrilling with the emotions of Christianity, was continually around him. It was the spiritual air that he breathed. Lastly, to finish this application, the natural scenery which surrounded him, the valley of the Esk, on whose sides he probably lived, the great cliffs, the billowy sea, the vast sky seen from the heights over the ocean, played incessantly upon him. They did not work on him as vitally as they did on Cynewulf, but they had their power.

It may be said that too much is made of this. We cannot think that Caedmon, who was, as they say, "a herdsman," and quite uneducated, derived much good from those influences, or drank them in at all. But it does not follow that he was wholly uneducated. He had been submitted to the monastic teaching, as all Hild's dependents were, and had received enough to stir his intellect and emotion. An elaborate education unmakes rather than makes a poet. Chaucer, Shakspere, Spenser, Wordsworth, Burns, Keats, Byron, Shelley, were not great scholars, and the best of them all had no education at all save what came in the air to him. I have sometimes wished that Milton had not been so good a scholar. Burns followed the plough along the mountain side, and may be set side by side with Caedmon who tended the horses on the night that a Divine One spoke to him. Nor does it

follow, that because Baeda says that he had the care of the cattle that night, that he was a herdsman at all. He was one of the secular attendants on the monastery, and may have been as good a gentleman as Halbert Glendinning. When Baeda says "on that night" it seems as if it were not Caedmon's regular habit to look after the cattle; but that he took it in his turn. But even if he were a herdsman, it is as good a beginning for English poetry to have Caedmon a herdsman as it was for Hebrew poetry to have David a shepherd. Whatever the man was, he had genius and, sleeping long, it awoke at last. How it awoke, and what it produced, either of itself, or in the hands of those whom it influenced, is now our business.

CHAPTER XV

CAEDMON

Caedmon, as he is called, is the first Englishman whose name we know who wrote poetry in our island of England; and the first to embody in verse the new passions and ideas which Christianity had brought into England. The date of his birth is unknown, but Baeda tells us that he died in 680, and as he began to write when he was well forward in years, his poem is loosely dated about 670. Hild had been some time at Streoneshalh[1] when he sang his first song, for we are certain that her abbacy began in 658. It ended in 680. Between these twenty-two years was

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[1] *Streones-halh.* Baeda translates this "the bay of the Beacon," and it has been taken to mean that there was a light of some kind either on the cliff or at the entrance of the bay. But *streon* is not an English word, or this is the only place where it occurs; and *healh* or *halh* is a word of doubtful meaning, and when it seems to occur in the charters has never the meaning of angle or corner or bay. Baeda, however, may be supposed to know of what he was writing, and it is most probable—as Mr. Gollancz has suggested to me—that Streoneshalh is a local name which the English found already given to the place, and that this name meant Beacon-bay.

The origin of the name Whitby "the white town" which the Danes gave to the place, is as obscure as that of Streoneshalh. It could not be called so from the colour of the cliffs, which are of dark lias shale. But the little harbour may have been surrounded by fishermen's dwellings, whitened with lime, and such a village would gleam brightly against the darkness of the cliff. I do not know whether the English whitened their wooden huts, but this is the only conjecture I can make to fit in with the Danish name; unless we were to imagine that *White* or *Hwit* was the name of the Dane who led the raid against the place, or of some other who settled there in after days.

laid the first stone of that majestic temple of English Poetry within whose apse, row after row, the great figures of the poets of England have taken their seats, one after another, for more than 1200 years.

We knew of Caedmon's life and work from Baeda, but nothing more was known of his verse to modern England until the time of Milton. A similar chance to that which gave us our single manuscript of *Beowulf* and *Judith* gave us our single copy of the set of poems which has been connected with the name of Caedmon. Archbishop Ussher, hunting in England for books and manuscripts with which to enrich the library of Trinity College, Dublin, found this manuscript and gave it to Francis Dujon, a scholar of Leyden, who is known in literature as Junius, and from whom the manuscript derives its name of the *Junian Caedmon*. Junius, who was a great lover of Anglo-Saxon, was then librarian to Lord Arundel, and when he left for the Continent in 1650, took care to have the manuscript printed at Amsterdam. He published it as the work of Caedmon,[1] and soon afterwards brought it back to England, where it finally found a home in the Bodleian. It is a small folio of 229 pages divided by a difference of handwriting into two parts. The first part, said to be in fine handwriting of the tenth century, is illustrated with rude pictures, and contains the *Genesis*, *Exodus*, and *Daniel*. The second part, in different and perhaps more modern handwriting, contains the poem to the several subjects of which the name of *Christ and Satan* has been given. It includes verses on the Fall of the Rebel Angels, the

[1] "Finding a substantial agreement between the first lines of the MS. and the Latin abstract which Baeda made of the verses Caedmon sang in his dream," he assumes that the whole set of poems were by Caedmon.

Harrowing of Hell, the Resurrection, the Ascension, Pentecost, the Last Judgment, and the Temptation.

Since the time of Junius critics have found in the separate parts of this manuscript so many various elements, and so much diversity of style, that they not only allot different writers to these separate parts, but also hesitate to attribute any one part to Caedmon. Indeed some have declared that Caedmon did not write a single line of it. It would be wearisome to give an account of all the theories and conjectures made about the authorship of this set of poems. They will be found collected with admirable skill by Wülker in his *Grundriss für Geschichte der Angelsächsischen Literatur.* The two things which interest us most are first, whether we may impute any part of the poems we have to Caedmon, the monk of Whitby of whom Baeda tells the story ; and secondly, the poetry itself. With regard to the first, there is no doubt a general correspondence between the lines which stand now at the beginning of the *Genesis* and the words which Baeda says Caedmon sang, and of which he gives the sense in Latin. There is, moreover, a correspondence between the subjects of which Baeda says the poet sang and the subjects treated of in the Junian Manuscript ; and these two correspondences make it somewhat probable that we have in this manuscript, along with poems written by other persons, some at least of the verses of Caedmon. If so, we must also add that they have suffered from interpolations and corruptions, and from their translation out of the Northumbrian into a West Saxon dialect. On the whole I am inclined to hope that we may have the pleasure of binding up the story in Baeda with some of the poems we possess ; and if the severe Muse of History permit this to us, it

is a great gain to sentiment. But the authorship of the several poems shall be discussed as we come to them, one after another. Before I enter on that task I must say something about Milton and Caedmon, and tell the story of Caedmon himself as it is given by Baeda.

When Junius brought the printed book back to England he showed it, no doubt, to his literary friends. One of these friends was Milton, and certain resemblances on which, in my opinion, too much stress has been laid, make it a curious question as to whether Milton had Caedmon's work before him when he was writing *Paradise Lost*. It is most probable that Junius translated the poem to Milton. Milton knew his Baeda well, and it would be strange if he were not enough interested in the story of Caedmon, his first predecessor in the art of poetry, to be eager to hear what he was supposed to have written concerning Milton's own subjects of the fall of the rebel angels and of man. It is also probable that Milton, who borrowed thoughts from every side for his Epic, retained in his ear some of the more vivid expressions of the poem Junius translated to him; that their spirit entered into him and took a Miltonic form in scattered places of his poem.[1] But the resemblances are slight, and less important than they would be if the subject were any other than that of the Fall of Man. We must remember that this subject had been treated of a hundred times in the mysteries and miracle plays; that dramas and poems had been written on it in every literature in Europe; that a number of ideas and phrases and descriptions used in writing of it had

[1] I have noted hereafter, in their proper place, extracts from Milton which resemble passages in the *Genesis*.

become conventional; and that the lines on which it was treated, and on which the characters of Satan, Adam, and Eve were drawn were similar through all this European work, if not frequently the same. The originality of Milton's poem does not lie in the subject or in its general treatment, but in the form of it and the poetry; and these, which are the main matters, are, in Milton's hands, as far superior to all the efforts of his predecessors as the Zeus of Pheidias was to all other images of the God. All we can say then is, that Milton had, it is likely, heard the *Genesis* translated to him, and that he got from the writer a suggestion or a phrase, here and there, which he used as he would use a suggestion or a phrase from Homer or Virgil, from Dante or Spenser. But, nevertheless, we may well imagine the romantic interest the blind old man would have when, sitting in some summer parlour, he listened to the song, a thousand years old, which the first poet of his race had sung concerning his own subject of "Man's first disobedience."

The story of Caedmon, as Milton read it in Baeda, is well known, but it will bear repetition; and it should be the first lesson taught to every English child, for when the glory of England's wealth, science, and arms has become but a subject for an historical essay, her poetry will still inspire and console mankind. Empires die, but Poetry lives on, and the story of the origin of English song in this land is the foremost of all English stories. It begins in the Abbey of Whitby. Hild, the Abbess, under whose rule Caedmon wrote, had already lived thirty-three years with great nobleness, when she took on her the monastic life. Aidan placed her at this age on the banks of the Wear, and then transferred her to Hartlepool. Nine

years afterwards, and on the same wild coast, she established the double Monastery of Streoneshalh, and dedicated it to St. Peter. Here, under this famous and beloved woman, Caedmon lived, attached in a secular habit to the monastery. It was not till he was well advanced in years that he learned anything of the art of poetry, wherefore, whenever at feasts it was agreed, for the sake of mirth, that all should sing in turn and the harp came towards him, he rose from the table and returned to his house. One evening, having done this, he went to the stables, for the care of the cattle had been for that night entrusted to him, and as he slept one stood by him, saluted him, and called him by his name, "Caedmon, sing me something." He answered, "I know not how to sing, and for this cause I left the feast, because I could not sing." Then the other who talked with him said, "All the same, you have to sing for me."—"What shall I sing?" Caedmon answered. "Sing," said the other, "the beginning of things created." Whereupon he immediately began to sing in praise of God, the world's upbuilder, verses which he had not heard before, and of which this is the sense:[1] "Now must

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[1] We have at the end of an old MS. of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* a Northumbrian version of this dream-song of Caedmon. Here it is, and it is perhaps the very form of the hymn which Ælfred, in the translation he made of Baeda, transferred into his own dialect—

> Nû scylun hergan hefaenrîces uard,
> Metudaes maecti end his môdgidanc
> Werc uuldurfadur sue he uundra gihuaes
> Eci dryctin or astelidae.
> Hae aerist scop aelda barnum
> Heben til hrofe haleg scepen
> Tha middungeard moncynnaes uard
> Eci dryctin aefter tiadae
> Firum foldu, frea allmectig.

Most persons have held that we have in these lines the exact words, or nearly so, of this first hymn of the poet; others, however, maintain that they are not

we praise the maker of the celestial kingdom, the power and counsel of the Creator, the deeds of the Father of glory, how He, since He is the Eternal God, was the beginner of all wonders, who first, Omnipotent Guardian of the human kind, made for the sons of men Heaven for their roof, and then the Earth." This is the sense but not the order of the words as he sang them in his sleep.[1] Then awaking he remembered what, sleeping, he had sung, and soon added more words in the same fashion in song worthy of the Deity.[2]

In the morning he came to the town reeve and told him what gift he had received, who forthwith led him to the Abbess, and made that known to her. Then she ordered him in the presence of many learned men to tell the dream and sing the verses, that by the judgment of all it might be approved what and whence this was; and it seemed to all that heavenly grace had been given to him by our Lord.

Then they told him some holy history and words of godly lore, and bade him, if he could, turn these into the melody of song. Returning in the morning, he sang to them in excellent verse what had been bidden him. Therefore the Abbess began to make much of and to love the grace of God in the man,[3] and

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original, but a translation into Northumbrian of Baeda's Latin; and, for my own part, their short abrupt rhythm suggests a late rather than an early date.

[1] The *order* of which Baeda speaks is the rhythmical order, for he adds, "neque possunt carmina, quamvis optime composita, ex alia in aliam linguam ad verbum sine detrimento sui decoris ac dignitatis transferri."

[2] There is a Norse legend concerning Halbiorn, a goat-herd, which has some resemblance to this story, and the same kind of tale is told of many poets, of Hesiod, for example. A similar gift of song in sleep is told of the writer of the *Heliand* but this is probably taken from the story in Baeda. There is no reason to doubt of the person of Caedmon. Baeda lived not far off from Whitby. He was born in 673, and Caedmon died in 680. He gives a free Latin translation of Caedmon's hymn, and an Index of his work. He knew the poems.

[3] I have introduced here and there into Baeda's account a few expressions added by Ælfred in his translation of this story.

exhorted him to forsake the secular and to take to the monastic habit, which being done, she made him a companion of the brethren in the monastery, and ordered him to be taught the whole series of sacred history. Thus Caedmon, meditating within himself all that he had heard, and, like a clean animal ruminating, turned it into the sweetest verse; and his song and his verses were so winsome to hear that his teachers themselves learned from his mouth. He sang the Creation of the world and the Origin of man, and all the history of Genesis, and of the departure of Israel from Egypt and the entrance into the land of promise, and of many other stories in the sacred Scriptures, and of the Incarnation of the Lord and of His Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension, and of the coming of the Holy Ghost, and of the doctrine of the Apostles. And of the terror of future judgment and the horror of hell, and of the sweetness of the heavenly kingdom he made many songs, and others also of the divine benefits and judgments,—in all which he had care to lead men away from the love of ill-doing, and to stir them to the love of good deeds. For he was a very devout man, humble and subject to regular discipline, but inflamed with a fervent heat of zeal against those who were otherwise minded, wherefore he brought his life to a fair end. For, when the time of his departure grew near, he was burdened for fourteen days with bodily infirmity, but his weakness grew so slowly upon him that he could both speak and walk. But on the night on which he was to depart he went to the house where those likely to die were carried, and desired a place where he might rest to be made ready for him. When it was past midnight, having talked in a joyful fashion with those who

were there, he asked whether they had the Eucharist nigh at hand. "What need of the Eucharist," they answered, "for you are not likely to die, since you talk as merrily with us as if you were in good health?" —"But," he replied, "bring me the Eucharist"; and having asked them if they were all in charity with him, and saying, "I am in charity, my children, with all the servants of God," he strengthened himself with the heavenly viaticum and made ready for the other life. Then he asked how near the time was when the brothers should sing the Nocturns. "It is not far off," they said. "Well," he replied, "let us wait that hour," and signing himself with the sign of the Cross, he laid his head upon the pillow, and, falling into a slumber, so ended his life in silence.[1] Thus, as he had served God with a pure and simple mind, and with tranquil devotion, so also he left the world with as tranquil a death; and the tongue which had wrought so many health-bearing words in the Creator's praise was silent also with God's praise, and signing himself with the Cross, commended his spirit into His hands; and he seemed, indeed, to have had foreknowledge of his death. Others after him tried, says Baeda in another place, to make religious poems in the English nation, but none could compare with him; for he learnt the art of song not from men, nor of man came it, but divinely aided, he received that gift. Thus he inspired others to write after him; nevertheless "sweet and humble," said Baeda, "was his poetry; no trivial or vain song came from his lips." Undisturbed by any previous making of lighter poetry, he came fresh to the work of Christianising English song. It

[1] In the same silent way, in sleep, Milton departed.

was a great step to make. He built the chariot in which all the new religious emotions of England could now drive along; and these emotions and their thoughts were ideal. The aim of his verse, wrote Baeda, was "to stir men to despise the world and to aspire to Heaven." It could not then have been mere paraphrase; paraphrase does not stir and kindle the heart of men. It was felt that in his fresh simplicity, in the native English grace of God in the man, there was an inspiration, to which his unlearned condition, perhaps his peasant origin, added a wonder and a charm.

The place where this piety of our forefathers, like that of Greece, derived from God Himself the art of song, was worthy to be the cradle of English poetry. That poetry has again and again rejoiced in the sea, and the sea almost surrounds the height of Whitby. Nor has our poetry neglected the spirit of the wild moorland or the river glens; and the moors and stream-scooped vales are companions of the cliffs of Whitby. The Esk, which waters the foundations of the two headlands between which Whitby lies, comes down through one of these wooded valleys to the harbour and the sea. About its banks, and on the steep hillsides above it, grew up the old seagoing town. A few fishermen's huts may have grown into a town in the time of Hild; and if Streoneshalh be a local British name, there was a little hamlet in the bay before she came.

Above the houses of this scattered town, fringing the beach, a broad paved road soon led to the upper part of the cliff,—that sharply-rising grassy bluff on the top of which now stands the church of St. Mary, with its long procession of tombstones to those drowned at sea. This slope was probably dotted, in the time of

Hild, with small oratories and cells, where monks, and perhaps nuns lived alone, apart from the main building of the monastery, and it is likely that these oratories were still there at the time of the Danish raid. Higher up, on the platform of the cliff, just where it began to climb from the western moor, stood the great hall of the monastery itself, built originally of wood and thatched[1] with reeds. Around it rose the houses of the Abbess and her officers, of the monks, and, divided from them, of the nuns—the refectories, the Abbey church, the guest-chambers, the dwellings of the stewards and the other secular attendants of a great monastery, the stables and all the necessary outbuildings. The Danes, about two hundred years after the time of Hild,[2] came down the valley of the Esk from York, and, leaping up the path, stormed and burnt to the ground this hive of human life, plundered it of all its goods, slew every one of its indwellers, and crossed the moor by the light of the blazing beacon they had kindled. In that condition the place continued for more than two hundred years, when Reinfrid, as the story goes, one of the knights William sent to subdue the rising in the North, passed by the spot, and seeing the devastation of this place of God, wept for the ruin, and swore that he would repair the worship and the temple of the Lord. Returning from the North, he entered the

[1] When Baeda tells us that Finan built a church in the Isle of Lindisfarne after the death of Aidan, he adds, "he built it not of stone but of hewn oak, and covered it with reeds—after the manner of the Scots" (*E. H.* Bk. iii. ch. xxv.) The "reeds" were probably the tall *bent* which grows all over the sand-dunes of the Northumbrian coast, and which blows back from the top of the hillocks like hair tossed in the wind. All round Bamborough and Holy Island this grass grows; the *bent* does not grow at Whitby, and Hild thatched her monastic buildings with straw, or reeds from the moorland pools.

[2] Of course Streoneshalh may have been destroyed by some roving Viking who sailed his ships into the bay; but there is no evidence of this, and it is more likely that it perished in the systematic ravaging of the monasteries which was carried out from York in 868.

monastic school at Evesham, and settled at Whitby.[1] There he built a church around which a monastery grew of which he became Prior. After many trials, the place grew into wealth and importance, and finally the abbey, whose tall and noble ruins we now see, was built. Standing, as one looks upwards from the town, on the very ridge of the long cliff, it dominates the vale below, and is seen sharp and dark against the evening sky. The austere Early English of its windows and pillars suits with the severity of its site, and is scarcely infringed on by the Decorated doorway at the west end, and by some Decorated windows. As we rest among its heaps of fallen wall and tower, we hear the sea roaring below the cliff, and the sound fills the aisle like the chanting of a solemn mass. We think then that this deep organ note struck on the ears of Hild twelve hundred years ago, and that the first chant of English poetry was made to its grave and mighty music; and so deep is the impression of antiquity when we are thus forced to look back over the continuous stream of English poetry that we seem, when we leave the eastern end of the abbey, to be walking with Caedmon himself, among his own cattle, over the long rank grass, to the outjutting point of the headland, which looks due north over the sea. A few minutes brings us to the edge. Three hundred feet below the dash of breakers is heard as they strike into the black caverns at the base of the cliff. The tumultuous northern sea lies outspread before us.

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[1] This is a pleasant story, but it is problematical. Reinfrid, or Regenfrith, was apparently a lay brother of Evesham, and with Ealdwine prior of Winchcombe, and Ælfwine, set out on foot to revive religion in the North, about 1071. They repaired the church at Jarrow, and Regenfrith after a time went down from Jarrow to Whitby. He may have been a soldier; it does not follow that he was a Norman. Like Ealdwine and Ælfwine, his name is really English.

Over these stormy waters came our Angle forefathers, bringing with them the poem of *Beowulf*. Over them Caedmon looked at evening as he framed the verse in which he sang the flood of Noah. Over them came the fierce ships of the Northmen, first to plunder, then to settle; and on them, so constant is the lowlier life of men, the fishing-boats have won their spoil and drifted into Whitby with the tide for more than a thousand years. A poetry which has always loved religion, and religion in its sterner and more solemn forms, which has been passionate with adventure, which has breathed with ease the airs of war, which has occupied with joy the ocean, and which has never, from the lowly peasant who began it to Chaucer, Shakspere, Milton, Wordsworth and Tennyson, neglected to sing of the simple life of the hamlet, could scarcely have had a fitter birthplace.

Nor was the spot devoid of other elements of poetry. Behind Hild, as she walked on her high cliff at night, the moors stretched away; and though she did not people them with heathen creatures of the mist like Grendel, she saw in the foldings of the clouds the rebel angels whom Caedmon drew, and the demons whom Cynewulf sang of as torturing Guthlac on his solitary hill. When she looked up to the heavens and beheld the stars—and keenly they shine on Whitby—or the aurora lights to the North, she seemed to see the homes of angels, and their choirs descend to bring on high the souls of saints that she knew to be in hermitage and nigh to death. And when storm was on the sea, and the light of the beacon she may have set up on the cliff, streamed over her head, and she saw the dim gleam of other lights which monks or nuns from her monastery had established in their cells

along the coast, and heard over the roaring of the waves the cries of seamen shipwrecked in the bay below, she heard also, in the wind and the scream of the billows and the birds, the crying of such demons as Cuthbert put to flight from the rocky solitude of Farne. These things are no conjecture. All early English poetry is full of such thoughts, and they have entered into all later poetry. Not once, but many times in English verse

> The fishers have heard the water sprite,
> Whose screams forebode that wreck is nigh.

Cynewulf saw the cloud-spirits of the rain and thunder stalking through the storm, and shooting their weapons. Baeda tells many a story of the celestial visitants seen at night descending from the stars; of the radiance of their ascending which St. Begu saw from Hackness—a cell founded by Hild—on the very night when the soul of the great Abbess passed away; of the pillars of pure light that rose above the dead bodies of the saints to the roof of heaven, and were seen far and wide over England. The nature-myth became religious, as much a part of the daily thoughts and visions of Christian as it had been of heathen life.

The same things pervade the poem of *Genesis*, the groundwork of which was at least done by Caedmon. The winds, and especially the north-east wind, which sends in so fierce a sea on Whitby, bear frost and bitter cold into the Hell of the *Genesis*.[1] The feeling of the writer of the *Exodus* (one of the school of Caedmon) for the sea in tempest breaks forth again and

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[1] Then in early morning comes an Eastern wind,
And a fierce-cold frost.—*Genesis*, l. 315.

The passage is, however, in a part of the *Genesis* which, it is said, was not written by Caedmon.

again in the poem, in long leaping lines, which follow one another like the billows of the Northern Ocean. When Abraham in the *Genesis* ascends the "steep downs till he comes to the ring of the highland," and passes over the wolds to build the bale fire for Isaac, it may well be the moors westward of Whitby which the poet places in his verse; and when God speaks to Abraham of the stars to which He compares his descendants for multitude, He speaks of them as Caedmon saw them from the height of the abbey cliff.[1]

In such scenery the first English poem grew up, and, to complete the picture, we may imagine the long hall of the monastery at night filled with abbess or prior, monk and nun, with lay brethren and servants, with thegns and churls and merchants seeking hospitality, among the rest perhaps King Ecgfrith seated near his sister Ælfleda,—for "kings and princes asked and received advice from Hild,"—with bishops and saintly men who came to visit the place where they had been brought up,—all gathered together, on each side of the huge fires, listening to Caedmon as he sang to them the paraphrase of the portion of Scripture allotted to him in the morning. Outside, the dark wind blew and shook the walls, and in the pauses of the harp and song the roar of the waves lent their deep tone to exalt the description of the Flood, which we may fairly

[1] Look upon the Heaven ; tell its high-adornments,
Clustered stars of sky ! These in splendour now
Far through space are scattering their excelling loveliness !
Brightly are they beaming over the broad sea.
Genesis, l. 2189.

I do not say that Caedmon wrote these lines, though it is possible. But they were written by one of his school, if not by him. And the writer may well have lived at Whitby. He certainly, I think, wrote upon the coast. I may add that to translate *rûme* "far through space" is perhaps more than I ought to do. "Far and wide," with the sense of "plenteousness" added to it, is the exact meaning.

give to Caedmon. We may well imagine how they listened to the noise of the wind and rain and the thunder of the deep when they heard these lines—

> Then sent forth the Lord
> Heavy rain from heaven ; eke he hugely let
> All the welling burns on the world throng in
> Out of every earth-vein ; let the ocean-streams,
> Swarthy, sound aloud ! Then upstepped the sea
> O'er the shore-stead walls ! Strong was he and wroth
> Who the waters wielded, who with his wan wave
> Cloaked and covered then all the sinful children
> Of this middle-earth. *Genesis*, l. 1371.

It may be that this passage, as I said, is by Caedmon himself; and, if so, it illustrates how, at times, his poetic work arose above mere paraphrase. Whenever he is stirred by his subject, as when he describes the Creation, the Flood, the war of Abraham with the Kings of the East, and the sacrifice of Isaac, his style lifts, his metrical movement becomes full and varied, his vision of the thing clear, his expansion of his matter full of touches which, by belonging to the spirit and manners of his time, quicken his work into reality.

CHAPTER XVI

"GENESIS A"

Genesis A, of which this chapter gives an account, and which we may with some probability allot, at least in part, to Caedmon, consists of the first 234 lines of the *Genesis*, and then of the lines from 852 to the close. The lines from 235 to 851 contain a second account of the Fall of man, and are called *Genesis B*. I shall treat them separately in the next chapter.

Genesis A begins with an ascription of praise to the glorious King, the Guard of the skies, which resembles the words of the hymn Caedmon is said to have composed in his dream. But the words are not the same as those of the earlier song. The proper action of the poem is opened by a description of the brightness and joy—the *gleám* and *dreám*—of the angel hosts in obedience to the Lord, until the highest of the angels, "who that ill counsel first began to weave," swollen with "pride, and of malicious hatred all athirst, said that he would strive with God for the wide clearness of heaven and make him a home and lofty seat in the north part of the skies."[1] Then God, filled with grim

[1] Deep malice thence conceiving and disdain,

. . . . . .

Homeward with flying march where we possess

wrath, "made a woful dwelling for the false spirits—howls of hell and hard pains, a joyless deep; furnished with everlasting night and crammed with sorrows"; "filled full of fire, and with frightful cold, with reek of smoke and ruddy flame. Grim was the guilt they had gathered against God: grim was the reward He gave them." For "He beat down their courage and bowed their pride, since He was embittered; and took from them peace and joy and their glorious brightness." Then Caedmon, taking fire from his own thought of the wrath of God, describes the personal battle of God with His enemies, much as the poet describes the wrestling of Beowulf with Grendel. Milton makes the aspect alone of the Son of God enough to discomfit His foes, but Caedmon is less divine—

> Stern the mood He had;
> In His grimness wrathful, gripped He on His foes
> With a cruel clutch, crushed them in His grasp;
> Cut them off from home, in His heart enraged.
>
> *Genesis*, l. 60.

When the battle is over, a far-off pathos comes into the tale. Caedmon, with more sympathy than Milton had, tells of the misery of the lost. "On a long way God drove the wretched ghosts: broken was all their boast, and bowed their strength, and their beauty shamed. In exile there they lived, fast bound in that dark dwelling. No more they sang their lofty song, but learned to know woe and care and sorrow and heavy pain, with darkness decked," as with a garment.

> The quarters of the North. . .
> . . . . . .
> Who intends to erect his throne
> Equal to ours, throughout the spacious North.
>
> *Par. Lost*, Bk. v.

Then in swift poetic change and contrast the pleasure and peace of heaven is set over against their misery—

> Then was sooth as ever soft society in heaven ;
> Manners fair and mild, and a Master loved by all,
> By his thegns their king ; and the glory of the warriors,
> Of the joy-possessors, waxèd with the Lord.
>
> ll. 78-81.

It is the same contrast which is made in the last speech of God in the Prologue to *Faust*. Yet how changed in form is the modern conception, how laden with philosophy!

> Doch ihr, die ächten Göttersöhne
> Erfreut euch der lebendig reichen Schöne!
> Das Werdende, das ewig wirkt und lebt,
> Umfass' euch mit der Liebe holden Schranken,
> Und was in schwankender Erscheinung schwebt,
> Befestiget mit dauernden Gedanken.

God ponders then, as in Milton, how He may replenish the empty seats of heaven, and looks forth on the vast abyss. In its description the echo of heathen thought is heard, and we may have in it the early English form of that universal Teutonic conception which is best represented by the Norse *ginnûnga gap* —the chasm of chaos, the world of dark mist out of whose waste and yawning gulfs all creation rose. It is well to note the word *heolster-sceado*—the shadow that hides the caverned gloom,—Milton's "hollow dark"; indeed, that sense of intense blackness of darkness which is so characteristic of Northern poetry appears throughout the noble lines I translate—

> Nor was here as yet, save a hollow shadow,
> Anything created ; but the wide abyss
> Deep and dim, outspread, all divided from the Lord,
> Idle and unuseful. With His eyes upon it
> Gazed the mighty-minded King and He marked the place

Lie delightless— (looked and) saw the cloud
Brooding black in Ever-night, swart beneath the heaven,
Wan, and wasteful all,[1] till the world became.
But the everliving Lord at the first created—
He the Helm of every wight— Heaven and the Earth;
Reared aloft the Firmament and this roomful land
Stablished steadfast there. . . .
. . . But as yet the Earth—
E'en the grass[2]—ungreen was now! Gloomed in Ever-night
Far away and wide, waters rolling wan,
Ocean veiled the world. Then the wondrous-bright
Spirit of the Heaven's Ward o'er the heaving sea was borne
With a mickle speed. . . . .
Then the Lord of triumphs let a-sundered be,
O'er the lake of Ocean, light apart from gloom,
Shadows from the shining. . . .
And of days the first saw the darkness dun
Fading swart away o'er the spacious deep.
Then that day departed o'er the ordered world
Of the midmost earth, and the Measurer drove
After the sheer shining— He our shaping God—
Earliest Evening on. On its footsteps ran—
Thrust along—the gloomy dark. That the King Himself
Named the Night by name. . . .
After that stept swiftly on, striding o'er the Earth,
Bright the third of morns. ll. 103-155.

Many of these phrases, especially when we consider that Caedmon was so near to heathen ways of thinking, are interesting. The earth, ungreen with

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[1] They viewed the vast immeasurable Abyss
Outrageous as a sea, dark, wasteful, wild,
Up from the bottom turned by furious winds
And surging waves. *Par. Lost*, Bk. vii.

This whirling of the winds in the vast depths of darkness is not in the Teutonic conception. That chasm of chasms is silent. But Milton has other phrases for Chaos. He calls it "the wasteful Deep," "the waste, wide anarchy of Chaos, Damp and dark," "the unvoyageable gulf obscure," "the dark, unbottomed, infinite Abyss," "the vast Abrupt,"—a splendid phrase.

The Void profound
Of unessential Night receives him next,
Wide-gaping, and with utter loss of being
Threatens him, plunged in that abortive gulf.
Par. Lost, Bk. ii.

Most of these phrases—so receptive was Milton—belong to the Teutonic and not to the classical conception of the Dark beyond.

[2] "A yawning gap was there, and nowhere was the grass." *Volospà.*

grass, was the earth as yet undivine; to all Teutonic peoples the green sward was hallowed, and had a consecrating power. When Adam is created he "steps forth on the green grass." The description of Chaos may be compared with the Norse *Niflheimr* — the region under earth covered with eternal night, joyless, alien from the gods,[1] filled with surging mist. Deep in this unbottomed darkness the Christians afterwards put their hell. Then, the mickle speed with which the Spirit of God is borne over the deep, is a heathen thought added to the Mosaic story. That the evening is *shoved on* by God is paralleled by a phrase in *Beowulf*, where the bright morning is *scofen* and *scynded* (*shoved* and *shindied*), and belongs to the same class of notions about the dawn and day, evening and night, which represents them as living beings pursuing one another, and eagerly hasting up the sky. Night here runs and thrusts on after the day, like a dæmon, but day steps swiftly up the sky, like a youth in his joy.[2] There is a gap of three leaves now in the MS., and we come at once to the Creation of Man. The little phrase that "in the breast of both was burning love to God" marks the nature of the poet and his race. God Himself is "blithe of heart" as He blesses them, and that touch of Northumbrian love of quiet nature, of which I have already spoken, steals in when Eden is described.

At this point the work of the elder poet ceases, but we take it up (*Gen. A*) again at the story of Cain and Abel. The phrases "Books tell us," "as the Scriptures say," recall that part of the tale of Baeda where he says that Caedmon heard the Scripture narrated to

[1] Milton's Chaos is equally apart from God.

[2] See Grimm's *Teut. Myth.*, articles "Day and Night."

him, and versed what he heard. The poem now, with the exception of an inserted simile and a few interesting phrases, becomes mere paraphrase. It is not till the poet comes to swelling sea and rain and storm and a great ship—to matters, that is, with which he may have been familiar at Whitby—that he rises into any original work. The poem is set into dialogue, and the dialogue is always vigorous. God declares His wrath with the folk of earth, but "thou shalt have peace," He says to Noah, "when the swart water, the wan waves of death, swell with the sinful." "Make thee a mickle mere-house, and resting-places in it and shelves in the ship's bosom; let the seams be fast against the working of the waves with earth-lime, alone of its kind, which grows harder and harder the heavier the black sea-waves pash and push upon it." And he calls it an ocean-house, a mickle sea-chest, a sea-dwelling, a hewn-wood of the wave, a foamy ship, a nailed-up board, a wood fortress. Then the long description of the Flood begins, written by one into the study of whose imagination had crept the sea. God will let downward fall from above—

> Slaughter rain upon the surface of the spacious earth.
> And I'll set a feud of war for a space of forty days
> 'Gainst (the souls of) men; and with surging troops of waves
> Owners and their ownings, quell them all, in death;
>
> . . . .
>
> When the blackening rack[1] 'gins arise (in heaven). l. 1350.

On this the verses follow which I have already quoted at p. 81, and we have the image painted of the ark floating high upon the flood, uninjured by that strange, indefinite creation of the English poets—the Terror of the Water—

[1] I have taken the reading *sweart-racu* (black rack of clouds) instead of *streám-racu* (stream-course),—that which is drifted out of the mountain-side.

Then afar and wide rode on, all the welkin under,
O'er the Ocean ring that excelling house ;
Faring with its freight ; and this faring ship,—
That swift sailer through the seas— durst no surges' terror
Heavy heave upon ; but the holy God
Led them on and freed them. Fifteen ells on high
Deep above the dunes stood the drowning flood of sea.
l. 1392.

The ark then rests on Ararat, "the sea began to ebb, and the heroes longed for the day when they might step over the nailed-plank out of their prison-house above the sea-stream's edge." It is a phrase which expresses what Caedmon must often have heard from seamen long tossed in storm. The raven is then sent forth, but the poet leaves him soon, and with the Northern tenderness, sets his imagination to work round the story of the Dove, expanding it with a delicate sympathy for the "gray-blue" bird—

Far and wide she went, her own will she sought !
All around she flew, nowhere rest she found,
For the flood she might not with her flying feet
Perch upon the land ; nor on leaf of tree
For the sea-streams step ; but the steep hills were
Overwhelmed with waters. Then the wild bird went
For the ark a-seeking, in the even-tide,
Over the wan wave, wearily to sink,
Hungry, to the hands of the holy man. l. 1455.

A second time she is sent forth, and the sympathy with animals and with joy which marks the old English poets is again expressed—

Far and wide she flew,
Glad in flying free, till she found a place
Fair, where she might rest ! With her feet she stept
On a gentle tree. Gay of mood she was and glad,
Since she, sorely tired, now could settle down,
On the branches of the tree, on its beaming mast !
There she fluttered feathers, went a-flying off again,
With her booty flew, brought it to the sailor,
From an olive tree a twig, right into his hands
Brought the blade of green. ll. 1465-74.

Then the chief of seamen knew that gladness was at hand, and he

sent forth, after three weeks, the wild dove who came not back again; for she saw the land and the greening trees. The happy creature, all rejoicing, would no longer of the Ark, for she needed it no more.

The poem hurries now through mere paraphrase till it arrives at the Abraham story. This begins with many speeches between God and Abraham, but there is nothing new in them. There is one, however—that of Abraham to Sarah on going down to Egypt—which, in the picture that introduces it, and in the turn given to the fear of the husband, might come out of a Greek tale—

> Abraham made answer— (when) he marked in Egypt
> Shining white the hornèd halls, and the high-built Burg
> Blickering in brightness— . . . .
> "When among Egyptians many haughty men
> Shall have looked with eyes on thy lovely face—
> When among the æthelings some of earls shall ween—
> Woman sheen as elf—! that (my wife) thou art,
> Bed-companion bright of mine, then will one of them
> Have thee to his own! I shall be in fear
> Lest among these angered folk, one with edge of sword
> Then may loose me of my life for his longing of desire."
> l. 1820.

At last he reaches the invasion of Chedorlaomer;[1] and his experience of war leads him, finely inventing, to develop the story with freedom into 200 lines; introducing all kinds of English customs in war. We see first the Jordan Valley wasted from the North by the four kings. It is a vivid picture of the invasion of a Northumbrian province. There can be nothing more historical. The whole "country-side is overspread with foes"—

> Then must many a fearful one,
> Many a maiden, pale of cheek, pass away, in trembling,
> To embracing of a stranger. Fallen were the shielders
> Of the brides and bracelets, sickened of their blood-wounds.
> l. 1969.

[1] Some say that the Abraham story is by another writer. It seems difficult to impute to Caedmon, or to the author of the first part, a story so full of war and the genius of war. Yet in those times every man was likely to have seen war, and Caedmon, now advanced in years, may have remembered his youth.

The country-folk gather under their kings and attack the invaders, and the battle is joined. "Loud were then the lances" the poet begins, but I have given the description of the first part of this battle (vol. i. 182). "Then were the Northmen overthrowers of the South-folk"; and we almost seem to hear the note of a Northumbrian victory over Mercia, or perhaps of some Northumbrian woe like that when Ecgfrith fell at Nechtansmere, and though that was five years after the death of Caedmon, I mention it to make the reader feel that in this account we have an actual picture of the time. The folk of Sodom and Gomorrah, givers of gold—

> In the surging crowd of shields shorn of their beloved were,
> Of their warrior-comrades. Then they went them, for their life,
> From that folk-encampment! . . . And they fell upon their track,
> Eaten by the edge of sword, children of the æthelings.
> . . . . Whom the weapons left
> Went to find a fastness, but the foes shared all their gold,
> Harried with their host that hoard-burg of men.
> . . . All the maidens fled away
> And the wives and widows, robbed by slaughter of their friends,
> From their sheltered home. ll. 1998-2011.

So the "war-wolves exulted in their triumph and their booty;" but now "a man, a sparing of the spears, fared quickly from the battle-field seeking Abraham," and told all to the Hebrew earl; and the hero told the evil hap to his friends—Aner and Mamre and Eshcol, his willing war-comrades. "Quoth he, it was the sorest of all sorrows that his brother's son suffered so dreadful a need. Think of some rede to deliver him—"

> Then the brothers three,
> With the swiftest speed when his speech was done,
> Healèd his heart-sorrow with their hardy words,
> Gave to him their troth that upon his foes, with him,
> They would wreak his wrong, or upon the Warstead fall.
> Then the holy hero bade the hostmen of his hearth

Take their weapons up ; and of warriors he,
Found, in all, eighteen of ash-bearing men,
And three hundred eke, loyal to their lord.
Of them all he wist, well could every one
On the fighting Fyrd bear the fallow linden.
ll. 2033-44.

As evening falls, they draw near the camp. Then Abraham plans with his chief men—and the particularity of the plan makes me think that the poet had an actual night-surprise in mind—to attack his enemy in front and rear "to show them grimly the war-moot, and hard hand-playing on two sides, for so in the strife of spears God will give them success—"

Then adventured, I have heard, under shadows of the night,
Heroes keen to combat. In the camps was clashing
Of the shields and of the shafts ; of the shooters falling ;
Brattling of the bolts of war ! Underneath the breast of men
Grisly gripped the sharp-ground spears
On the foemen's life. Thickly fell they there
Where, before, with laughter they had lifted booty.
l. 2060.

The glory of the ashen-spears—the triumph of the Northern men—is reversed, and Abraham, Lot and the rejoicing women "saw the fowls of prey tearing the flesh of the murderers of freemen." To meet them bringing back the spoil and captives come the King of Sodom, and Melchisedek, bishop of the people. "Be thou honoured," cries Melchisedek to Abraham, "amidst the multitude of men in the eyes of Him who has given to thee war-glory of the ashes"; and he preaches such a little sermon as Aidan might have done to Oswald. After which the war-king of Sodom takes up the word, and he speaks well—

Give to me the maidens of my people here,
Those whom thou hast freed by the forces of thy host
From the death-clasps of these men. Keep the circled gold

Which was ownèd once of our people here,
Cattle, lovely trappings. Let *me* lead, in freedom,
All the bairns of æthelings back again to home,
To their wasted dwelling— all the women and the youths,
And the doleful widows! Dead are now their offspring,
Good folk-fellows in the fight, save a few alone
Who must now with me hold the mark (against the foe).
l. 2126.

Then Abraham answered, and we hear in his words the temper of a great English Ealdorman—

Wielder of these warriors, now I vow to thee
Here before the holy God . . . .
. . . . that of this world's good
Neither scat nor scilling, will I seize, lest afterwards
Thou should'st say unto thyself that I've surely been
On this earth enriched with the ancient treasure
Of the Sodom realm, [with silver and with gold].
But the booty mine by battle thou shalt bear away from hence,
All except the share of these æthelings of mine,
Of Aner and Mamre and of Eshcol too—
Never will I from my warriors take away their right.
Go, and bear with thee
Home the gold enchased, and the girls embraceable,
Women of thy people! For a while thou needest not
Fear the fighting rush of the foes we loathe—
Battle of the Northmen! For the birds of carrion
Splashed with blood are sitting, under shelving mountains,
Glutted to the gullet with the gory death of hosts.
l. 2139.

With this fine passage, in which the English fierceness and pride break out in spite of the new gentleness of Christ, the war-story ends.

The paraphrase continues, relating the history of Abraham and Sarah, Ishmael and Hagar. A few passages are full of force. When the poet tells of the many lands the children of Abraham shall have, he paints this picture which might serve for many a Northumbrian fortress, if we may place it on a Roman site where stone walls and houses were seen by the English. It might do for York. Abraham's offspring, God says, shall have as their own

Each of the folk-lands far as these three waters
Sweep around with streams stone-burgs rising steep;
Foaming flow the floods round the fortress[1] of the folk.
l. 2211.

But the most striking thing is the love of dialogue. Every thing is thrown into talk, and, unlike the story of the Fall in *Genesis B*, the dialogue is here more dramatic than epic. One might almost say that the dramatic genius of the English people begins to show itself in this early poem; and that it is possible—for Cynewulf runs also into dialogue—that the drama might have been much sooner developed in England, had not this tendency been, with others, overwhelmed by the long-winded story-telling which came to us from France. At any rate we have here, probably towards the end of the seventh century, that half-dramatic form of poetry which would easily slip among the common people into the miracle play, or the mystery. But the note of it both in feeling and form is much higher than that of the earlier mysteries. I give one passage to illustrate what I mean. I have left out the connecting phrases—"her the angel answered," and the rest—and the piece becomes somewhat dramatic. The angel, a "thegn of glory," speaks to Hagar—

Angel. Whither hastest thou, O thou helpless woman,
Wanderings sore to suffer? Thee doth Sarah own.
Hagar. I have fled from woes, I, in want of every wish,
Mournful from my dwelling, from my mistress' hate,
From her vexing, from wrong words. Now within the waste
With a weeping face, must I wait my fate
When from forth my heart hunger or the wolf
Shall my soul and sorrow snatch away together.
Angel. Care not thou afar through thy flight to sunder
Fellowship with her; find her now again;
Earn to thee her pity; poor of spirit, now begin
To endure with goodness! Gracious be the Lord to you.
Genesis, l. 2272.

[1] *Byht* = dwelling or territory.

This is but one example of a quasi-dramatic method which is used through the *Genesis*. It is introduced also at intervals in the tale of the sacrifice of Isaac with which *Genesis A* abruptly ends. Homely Northern touches enter into it; and it has a further interest in this—that Caedmon was not so far from heathendom as never to have heard of human sacrifices. Here are portions of the story—

God, intent to know the fortitude of the Ætheling, tested him with austere words. "Go, Abraham, take thine own child with thee, offer, thyself, thine only son to me. When thou hast climbed the steep mountain, the ring of the high-land, thou shalt make ready a bale-fire for thy bairn, slay thy son with edgèd sword, and then with swart fire burn up the body of thy loved one. And the holy man, the white-haired giver of gold, girded his gray sword upon him, bridled his ass and led forth Isaac from his Hof, a bairn unwaxen; then took his way across the waste, until that, wondrous bright over the deep water, arose the spear-point[1] of the third day." Then he "saw up-towering the high downs," and climbed them with his son—

> Walking o'er the wolds; wood the son was bearing,
> Fire and sword the father! . . .
> So at last he stood on the high-land's roof.
> Then began upload the pile and awaken fire,
> And he fettered fast feet and hands alike
> Of his (only) bairn! On the bale he heaved
> Youthful Isaac up; and at once he gripped
> By the hilt the sword. With his hands he would
> Slaughter now his son, sink the fire down
> With his bairn's own blood. ll. 2898-2907.

[1] *Ord* is the word used, "the sharp point of a spear," the "edge of a sword"; lit., the beginning (or end?) of a thing. It is here, I think, the first gold edge of the sun as it emerges from the sea, like the triangular top of a glittering spear.

It is almost an actual picture of a Norseman's human sacrifice, and the *Genesis* ends abruptly with its forbidding, and with the blessing of God on Abraham—

> Pluck the boy away   living from the pile of wood.

CHAPTER XVII

"GENESIS B"

Genesis B (ll. 235-851) retells the story of the overthrow of the rebel angels, and then passes on to the tale of the temptation and fall of man; and most critics believe it to belong to a much later time than the seventh century. A multitude of theories have been formed about its sources, its writer, its age, its metre, and its quality. The most important of them all is that suggested by Sievers, and it is on the grounds he has partly established that the division of the *Genesis* into *Genesis A* and *Genesis B* has been made and generally accepted. He declares that in metre, in manner, in style, and in language this episode stands apart from all other English poetry; but, on the other hand, it stands very near to the Old-Saxon poem of the *Heliand* in metre, manner, style, and language. The *Heliand* is a poem of the ninth century on the Saviour; an account in verse of the Gospel history, the author of which used a Latin poem of the fifth century, written by Bishop Avitus of Vienne, as his original. Sievers claims to have proved that *Genesis B* is most nearly related in language and diction to the *Heliand*, and that its writer also drew largely from the poem of Avitus, from the books *De origine mundi*, *De*

originali peccato, and *De sententia dei*, and that he is indebted to them for several "motives." On these grounds, he infers that the poem, out of which this episode of ours was taken and inserted in the *Genesis*, was originally written in Old Saxon by the author of the *Heliand*;[1] that an Englishman living in Germany translated it into English, and that the translation, having lost its later part, was, in the tenth century, incorporated into the *Genesis* poem in England. Professor Ten Brink turns the theory round, and rejects the notion of a translation. It was an Old Saxon—perhaps Bishop John of Æthelney, whom Ælfred brought from Old Saxony—who, using the Latin work of Avitus, and full of the spirit of the *Heliand*, of its metre, phrases, and style, wrote a poem on the fall of man in English and in England. Then some later editor of the Caedmonic *Genesis*, finding a gap in the manuscript at line 234 (and the sheet containing the beginning of the interpolated poem fails in the extant MS.), filled up the space from this second English poem on the same subject; but in order to give some unity to his work began again at the beginning of things, and told over again the Fall of the Angels, wholly reconceiving this subject, and stamping it with his own individuality. Thus Northern Germany, where the *Heliand* had sprung up from the seeds of English learning scattered by English missionaries, gave back in the *Genesis B* a part of what it had received."[2] I do not see why we may not make another supposition—that one of the Nor-

[1] This, says Wülker, is the weakest part of Sievers' theory. Indeed, there is no clear evidence of it. The evidence here ought to be the strongest, and it is the weakest.

[2] The whole statement will be found in Ten Brink's *Hist. Eng. Lit.* chaps. iv. viii., and in the Appendix A.

thern English missionaries to Germany, or an English descendant from them, who had with him the Caedmonic poems, and who became acquainted with the work of Avitus, wrote the episode as we have it, and incorporated it with the work of Caedmon. Its likeness to the *Heliand* might be explained by this Englishman having read the *Heliand*, or if the episode were written before the *Heliand*, by the writer of the *Heliand* having seen the English poem.[1] As regards the other theories, I refer my readers to the *Grundriss* of Wülker, where they are all given in brief and clear abstract. One thing alone seems to stand out with some clearness—that this episode is later than the rest of the *Genesis*, and that it has Old Saxon connections. Yet even that has been denied, and in the midst of these critical uncertainties, it is pleasant to go through the poem itself and to translate those passages which seem to have a literary value.

But first, it is right to say that it is not a paraphrase at all. It is a poem of some elaboration of design, having a beginning, middle and end, thrown with some artistic care into a whole and treated in a quasi-epic manner. Then the metre is very different from that of *Genesis A*. The lines are lengthened out, 13, 15, 17, and even 21 syllables,[2] so that the abrupt short translations given by Thorpe and others do not, even in the slightest way, represent the gallop and numerous trampling of the Anglo-Saxon verse; nor the stately procession, in pathetic passages, of the language. Dr. Guest, who was profoundly impressed with the metrical

[1] A theory somewhat like this is that of Schmeller. He thinks that Caedmon's poems and the *Heliand* were written by the same poet. It seems a mere conjecture, but then conjecture runs riot over this subject.

[2] This is a special character of the *Heliand*, but the same expansion of the line occurs in other Anglo-Saxon poems belonging to the eighth century.

movement of the *Genesis*, and whose authority on the matter deserves high consideration, declares[1] that "the passages in which Caedmon puts on all his sublimity are unfortunately among the most difficult. These extracts (which he gives) may serve, in some measure, to show the masterly manner in which he manages his numbers. His accent always falls in the right place, and the emphatic syllable is ever supported by a strong one. His rhythm changes with the thought—now marching slowly with a stately theme, and now running off with all the joyousness of triumph when his subject teems with gladness and exultation. There is reason to believe that to these beauties our forefathers were deeply sensitive, and that Caedmon owed to them no small portion of his popularity. In these respects he has no superior in the whole range of our literature, and, perhaps, but one equal." Guest had no doubt, it seems, of Caedmon's authorship of the *Genesis*.

It is some consolation if we are, as it seems, to throw aside *Genesis B* as Caedmon's, that so careful a scholar and so good a metrist as Dr. Guest, saw in his time nothing irrational in believing that Caedmon of Whitby was the writer of the Caedmonic poems of Junius, and that it did not occur to him to doubt that the writer of the beginning of *Genesis* was also the writer of *Genesis B*. In fact, he applies his remarks about the excellence of the rhythms almost more to the earlier than to the later work. He makes more quotations from *A* than from *B*. For myself, with all the criticisms before me, I see no absolute improbability in Caedmon having done the whole of *Genesis* and *Exodus*. I do not believe he did; but

[1] *History of English Rhythms.*

if the question were only literary, I should say that if we grant him poetic genius, then he may have had three different styles and periods—even in the space of ten or twelve years, even though he began so late in life; and his movement forward in power of thought and of technical excellence may have been extraordinary. No one can tell what genius may or may not do. It is beyond analysis or prediction. Caedmon may have changed into *Exodus* and fallen to *Daniel.* But this is very improbable. If Caedmon had genius of this great character, it is likely that it would have burst forth before he was "well advanced in years." Moreover, even from the literary point of view, the argument against his authorship of this poem (235-851) is very strong. *Genesis B* has not only an intellectual subtlety which is wholly absent from *Genesis A*, but also it does not possess the poetic freshness which pleases us in the earlier work, in the account, for example, of the Flood and of the battles of Abraham. It smells of a more learned and more artificial age. There is also in this episode a distinct conception of the characters of Adam, Eve, and Satan, an effort to individualise them and to represent their action on one another, which is almost unknown in other Anglo-Saxon work, and which is utterly strange to the rest of the book. Unless Caedmon passed, within ten years, from a natural simplicity as objective as pictorial, to a complex, cultivated and somewhat artificial poetry, subjective and therefore less pictorial; unless he lost, as time went on and he became more of the monk, every trace of the heathen elements which lingered in the peasant; unless he changed somewhat as art changed from Giotto to Fra Angelico, he could not have written this portion of the

Genesis. It is not impossible, but it is extraordinarily improbable.

Genesis B opens with the return of God to heaven after His warning to Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree; and then describes the Angel tribes in heaven, and especially One, "so powerful, so mighty in thought, swaying over so much, so beauteous in his form, like to the light stars," that he was second only to the Lord of Hosts. Pride and insolence seized on him, and it is one of the reasons given for this by the poet, that when Lucifer looked on his body he saw that it was "light and gleaming, clear-white and glorious-hued," as if physical beauty lifted him to the level of God. Then his haughtiness (while he is yet in heaven) breaks forth in a fine soliloquy—

278. Why, then, should I toil? quoth he. Not a shred of need there is
Now for *me* to have a master! With these hands of mine I may
Work as many wonders! Mickle wielding force have I
For the setting up of a goodlier stool than He
Higher in the Heaven! Why should I at all, for His favour be His slave,
Bow to Him in such a bondage? I a god may be, like Him.
With me stand strong-hearted comrades, who will nevermore, in the struggle fail me;[1]
Heroes hardy-hearted! They have for their Lord, chosen me and hailed me:
286. Far-famed fighters they! Any one may plan a rede, with such followers as these
With such folk-companions frame it! They are ready friends of mine,
True in all their thoughts to me! I may be their (trusted) Lord

[1] See how, in his rising passion and appeal, the lines run on. This line has over twenty syllables. In the 286th line the first half consists only of the normal four syllables while the second half gallops into nine; and in the 290th line, being one of concentrated scorn, the syllables are reduced almost as low as possible. This is the self-restrained liberty and variety of a fine metrist, who uses his vehicle as the passionate music of thought, contracts and expands it to echo the vibration of his emotion. This free and noble manner of rhythms runs through the whole of this *B* portion of *Genesis*, and extends, but with a less variety of force and ease, into *Exodus*.

In this realm of mine to rule. So it is not right, methinks,
That for any favour I should need to fawn,
Or for any good, on God. I'll no longer be His Younger!

This is the wild Northern freedom! It is a great earl speaking, whose pride in personal beauty, whose insolence of individuality, has set him into haughty anger against his lord. In its swift revolt for the personal liberty of pride, and in the fierce brooding of that pride, in the sense of power expressed in it to work and to build a kingdom, in its deep feeling of the close relation of chief and thegns and of their mutual respect, in the praise of good rede with the Witan, the speech belongs to early English heathendom; and Milton, who also takes pride as the leading motive of the rebellion of Satan, similarly conceives the lonely rage of the Archangel, which yet, not altogether lonely, is shared with Beelzebub his friend; for Milton, unlike our poet whose Satan is more self-contained, creates a pathetic passion round his fiend by filling his heart with the ancient affections of heaven. Hell is then described, the abyss of pain; swart, victoryless,[1] deep-daled. At even, through unmeasured length of hours, fire is ever new; but it is interchanged with bitter cold—

315. At the earliest of the dawning comes the Eastern wind,
And a fierce-cold frost; ever fire or piercing cold;

. . . .

324. Hot the boiling (heat) of war in the breast of Hell,
Burning and the breadth of flame, and withal a bitter reeking,
Darkness, vapour dun . . . .

[1] *Victory-less—sigeleas.* I do not like the word I use, and *sige* as a prefix loses often its meaning of victory, and has the general meaning of *noble* or *glorious*, as when, in the *Andreas*, Matthew is called Andrew's *sigebroðor*. Nevertheless I keep the word *victory* as often as I can, because it brings us back to the early source of glory. There was no possibility of victory falling to the lot of any of the warriors of Hell; no glory there.

333. Lightless was the land, full of leaping blaze,
Mickle was the fear of fire.[1]

On this "bed of death" lay Satan, once sheenest of the angels, whitest within the heaven, fettered down with iron bands, feet and hands, and hafted over neck and breast with "great heat-smitten bars," so that when he plots the fall of man, he cannot carry out his plan himself, but must give it into the hands of one of his comrades. The rude picture in the MS. represents him bound in this fashion. "His thought boils about his heart," as hot as the hell around him; and here is the famous speech, which is almost the only passage in the poem known to Englishmen, and whose beginning, in its passionate regret for heaven and its lonely Northern pathos, is strangely like a renowned Miltonic passage[2]—

[1] Here are some Miltonic parallels—

Beyond this flood a frozen continent
Lies dark and wild, beat with perpetual storms
Of whirlwind and dire hail.

The parching air
Burns frore, and cold performs th' effect of fire.

The damned are haled from beds of raging fire to starve in ice, thence hurried back to fire.—*Par. Lost*, Bk. ii.

A dungeon horrible, on all sides round,
As one great furnace flamed; yet from those flames
No light; but rather darkness visible . . . .
The seat of desolation, void of light
Save what the glimmering of these livid flames
Casts pale and dreadful.—*Par. Lost*, Bk. i.

Milton has left out the reek, the bitter smoke.

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[2] O how unlike the place from whence they fell!

"Is this the region, this the soil, the clime,"
Said then the lost Archangel, "this the seat
That we must change for Heav'n?—This mournful gloom
For that celestial light?" . . .
"Farewell, happy fields,
Where joy for ever dwells!"—*Par. Lost*, Bk. i.

356. O how most unlike is this narrow stead
To that other home which of old we knew
High in Heaven's realm! . . . .
. . . .
364. This the greatest of my sorrows—
Is that Adam now, who of earth was wrought,
Shall possess my stool, hold my stronglike seat;
Be in bliss himself and we this bale endure,
Harm this hell within! Ai, ai! Of my hands had I the power,
Might I out of this for one hour be,
But one winter hour, with this host would I——!
But about me braced lie the bands of iron,
Rides me here a rope of chains, realmless am I now!
Mickle fire is here
Over me and under. Ne'er before I saw
Landscape loathlier than this. Never lulls the flame
Hot along this hell . . . .
382. . . . . Round about me lie
(Heavy) forged in heat, of the hardened steel,
Great, the gratings barred. Me hath God with them
Hafted by the hals. Wherefore wot I well, that my heart He knew,
And as well He wist, He of warriors Lord,
That for Adam and for me evil-work would rise
All about the heavenly realm, had I only, anywhere, wielding[1] of my hands!
Yet we now endure, pains of doom in hell: such the darkness and the heat
Fierce and fathomless. Us hath God Himself
In the swart mists swept away.
393. Shall we not for this have vengeance,
And with any pain repay him since from Light he parted us?

God has made earth and men to take our place—on Adam then and on his offspring be our ill avenged! Turn them aside from God, till they, too, fall into this grim abyss. Here the bairns of men shall be our thralls! Begin we, now, to think upon this Fyrd.[2] Then he appeals to his thegns—

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[1] *Geweald* is, of course, "power," the German *gewalt*. But I think I may be allowed the above translation.

[2] The argument of Beelzebub in *Par. Lost*, Bk. ii., is very similar to this. I quote a portion of it, but the whole is worth comparison with our passage—

"Or, if not drive,
Seduce them to our party, that their God
May prove their foe, and with repenting hand

409. If to any thegn have I treasures of a king
Given in the days gone by, while as yet in that good realm
Blissfully we sat, o'er our seats had sway—
Then at ne'er a happier hour could he me repay,
For my gift return me gift— if for that would one,
Any one of all my thegns,
Come out of this cellarage, and had craft with him [1]
Outwards far to fly with his feathered garment,
Wheel him through the welkin where, well-wrought, are standing
Adam and his Eve on the earth their kingdom
With their weal enwreathed— and [2]—O hither whirled adown are we
Into these deep dens. . . . .
. . . .

425. . . . . This is on my soul so sore,
Most this rueth me in heart, that the realm of heaven
Is their own for ever. Ah, if one of you
Should this work with any wiles— that the Word of God
They may leave and all His lore, loathier they'll be to Him!
If they break His bidding, then His wrath shall burn on them,
Then their weal is whirled away, and their wretchedness is readied,
Harm and sorrow hard! Have in thought then, all of you,
How ye may o'ercraft them, so within these chains shall I
Softly rest me then.

This is pure heathen, and the comfort of vengeance was never better put! "Who does this for me," he cries, "shall sit here by myself." Then one of his thegns sprang up and readied him for the journey, and it is a vigorous piece of word-painting—

Abolish His own works. This would surpass
Common revenge, and interrupt His joy
In our confusion, and our joy upraise
In His disturbance; when His darling sons,
Hurl'd headlong to partake with us, shall curse
Their frail original, and faded bliss—
Faded so soon! Advise if this be worth
Attempting, or to sit in darkness here
Hatching vain empires."

[1] "Come on—you hear this fellow in the cellarage."—*Hamlet*. The Anglo-Saxon word is *clustor*—a bar, or cell. I use *craft* in the translation in the sense of power.

[2] This sudden breaking off at the *and*, with the fierce contrast which follows, is well wrought. The writer must have heard or been a great orator.

442. Then a grim-set foe of God 'gan to gird himself,
Eagerly, in his equipment: artful was his mind;
Set on's head a hollow helm, and full hard he bound it,
Spanned it down with spangs;[1] many speeches well he knew
All of words awry! Thence he wheeled him upward,
Heaved him through the hell-doors, strength of heart had he,
Beat his wings the lift along,[2] foully bent his mind was;
Swung the fire on either side by his fiendish power,[3]
454. Till he Adam found in the earthly realm,
Wrought in wisdom there, and his wife was with him,
Winsomest of women. . . . .
460. And a twain of trees therein stood beside them;
With abundant fruit were they overladen.
466. . . . . Not alike their waxing was:
One was so delightful, beautiful and sheen!
Lythe it was and lovesome; that of life the tree was!

. . . .

477. But the other stood, swart above and swart below;
Dark it was and dusky, and of death it was the tree,
That much of bitter bare.

The temptation follows, set forth in dialogues which belong more to an epic than a dramatic manner. The inventiveness of the talk and the imaginative presentation of the subject—those two essential qualities—are equally remarkable. They are even subtle, of that subtlety which does not belong to the simpler age of poetry. But the full impression is spoiled by repetition of thoughts and words.

The fiend throws himself into the form of the Worm and winds himself round the tree of death, and with the

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[1] "With glittering spangs that did like starres appear."—Spenser, *Fairy Queen*, iv. 11-45. Gascoigne also uses it in the *Steele Glasse*. Spang is a metal fastening.

[2] Literally, "played, moved up and down on the lift." It means the up and down movement of the wings, as "the hard hand-play" means the rising and falling of the smiting hands in battle; or it might mean that he himself rose and fell on the air of Hell, like Satan, who

> Puts on swift wings, and toward the gates of Hell
> Explores his solitary flight: sometimes
> He scours the right hand coast, sometimes the left;
> Now shaves with level wing the deep, then soars
> Up to the fiery concave towering high.—*Par. Lost*, Bk. ii.

[3] On each hand the flames
Driven backward slope their pointing spires.—*Par. Lost*, Bk. i.

fruit in his grasp (for he is as yet the Worm with hands and feet) speaks to Adam: "Longeth thee for aught, Adam, up to God? Hither on His errand I have fared from far! Not long since I sat with Himself, and He bade me tell thee to eat this fruit, that thy strength, thy mind, should be mightier. Thou hast made thyself dear to God; I heard Him praise thee. By me He bids thee learn knowledge. Take then this fruit in hand, bite it and taste. Thy heart shall be expanded, and thy form for it the fairer." "When I heard the Lord of Victory speak," answers Adam, "and bid me hold fast His word, and gave me this bride—this woman fair and sheen—swart hell, He said, should hold him who bore aught of that loathly thing in his breast. I wot not whether, lying, thou comest here, or art in truth a messenger from Heaven." And the English caution of the speech, with its note of scorn, ends in a sharp repulse of the tempter, and an outburst of trust in God—"I know naught of thy bidding, works or ways; I do know what He bade me when last I saw Him. To none of His angels art thou like. Therefore I hear no more from thee; thou mayest take thee hence! Fast is my faith in the Almighty God who wrought me with His hands, and He can give me all good things, even though He send no Junger here." Wroth of mood, the mightiest of Scathers turned him where Eve was standing—and sheen was she shapen—and first he frightens her. "God will be in wrath when He hears that His message is rejected. But if thou listenest to me, punishment will be warded off from both of you. Then will thine eyes also become so clear that thou shalt see all over the wide world and the throne of God Himself and win His grace. Then, too, thou

mayest turn Adam round thy pleasure, if thou hast will for that."[1] So with lies he lured her, and "the Worm's thought began to seethe within her; her heart bent to his tempting." She took the fruit of the tree of death, and straightway—

603. Sheener to her seemed all the sky and earth;
All this world was lovelier; and the work of God,
Mickle was and mighty then, though 'twas not by man's device,
That she saw (the sight)— but the Scather eagerly
Moved about her mind. . . . .

611. "Now thyself thou mayest see, and I need not speak it—
O thou, Eve the good, how unlike to thy old self
Is thy beauty and thy breast since thou hast believed my words!
. . . . Light is beaming 'fore thee now,
Glittering against thee,[2] which from God I brought,
White from out the Heavens. *See, thy hands may touch it!*
Say to Adam then, what a sight thou hast,
And what powers— through my coming!"

Then follows on this fine thought a pretty picture of Eve and a noble description of the vision she sees through the magic power of the fruit. I give it in parts. It is, alas! filled up with homiletic passages—

626. Then to Adam went Eve, the sheenest of all women,
Winsomest of wives, e'er should wend into the world,
For she was the handiwork of the heavenly King.
. . . . Of the fruit unblest
Part was hid upon her heart, part in hand she bore.

655. "Adam, O my Lord, this apple is so sweet,
Blithe within the breast; bright this messenger;
'Tis an Angel good from God! By his gear I see

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[1] Milton puts this thought in the mouth of Eve—

Shall I to him make known
As yet my change, and give him to partake
Full happiness with me, or rather not,
But keep the odds of knowledge in my power
Without copartner? so to add what wants
In female sex, the more to draw his love,
And render me more equal, and perhaps—
A thing not undesirable—sometime
Superior; for, inferior, who is free?—*Par. Lost*, Bk. ix.

[2] *Glaedlic ongean*, "glad or shining against thee." It comes pouring on to her in waves.

That he is the errand-bringer of our heavenly King!
. . . . I can see Him now from hence
Where Himself He sitteth, in the south-east throned,
All enwreathed with weal; He who wrought the world!
And with Him I watch His angels, wheeling round about Him,
In their feathered vesture, of all folks the mightiest,
Winsomest of war-hosts! Who could wit like this
Give me, did not God Himself surely grant it me.
. . . . Far away I hear—
And as widely see over all the world,
O'er the universe widespread!— All the music-mirth
In the Heavens I can hear!— In my heart I am so clear,
Inwardly and outwardly, since the apple I have tasted.
See! I have it here, in my hands; O my good Lord!
Gladly do I give it thee; I believe from God it comes!"

It is characteristic of English feeling, but curiously unlike Milton who makes Adam yield at once, moved by overwhelming love, that the Caedmonic Eve takes the whole day, speaking closely to him with many beseechings, to make the man eat; and he surrenders at last, as Merlin to Vivien, half from love and half from weariness. As if to insist on this, it is twice, thrice repeated that his heart began to change towards her will, though I fancy that the repetitions are but interpolations. Yet the honour of the woman is saved as it is not in Milton. She did not do this for the sake of wrong, but "through a faithful heart, to win for Adam all the good the fiend—who seemed to her an angel—had promised them from God." At the last he from the woman took

718. Hell and Hence-departure,[1] though 'twas hight not so,
But it owned the name only of a fruit.
Yet it was Death's dream, and the Devil's subtle lure,
Hell and Hither-going, heroes' overthrow,
Murder it of men!

Then in a fine exultant joy Satan's Thegn, having won his day, bursts out into triumphant mockery; and so

[1] Death.

vividly does the poet see the thing that he makes his devil, excited by the flaming joy of vengeance, call up before his eyes the very presence of his master, bound deep in hell, and speak to him as it were face to face. "Soon as the fruit touched at the heart of Adam then laughed and sported there that bitter-thoughted messenger; and cried out for both of them his thanks to his Lord"—

726. "Now for me I have the favour
Thou hast vowed me, won, and thy will accomplished!
Now for many, many days men are here befooled,
Adam and his Eve! Unto them disfavour
Weirded from the Wielder is. . . .
. . . . So they shall no longer
Hold the heavenly realm, but to hell must go
Down the swart descent. So, no more of sorrows
Need'st thou bear within thy breast, where in bonds thou liest;
Nor have mourning in thy mind for that men are dwelling
In the heavens high, while that harms must you and I
Now endure, and direful woes, and the dusky land.
750. . . . Therefore let thy mind
Blithe within thy breast be now!

For two things are done—the children of men have lost the skies, and into the flame, into hot hell, shall wander down to thee—and eke is harm to God and grief of mind wrought out. Whatever misery we bear

756. This is now on Adam all paid back again,
With the loathing of his Lord and with utter loss of heroes,
With the murder-pains of men! Therefore is my mood all healed,
Round my heart my thought's enlarged, all our harms are now avenged,
All the pain we long endured! Now will I again, to the flaming low be nearer!
Satan I will seek therein; he abides in swarthy hell;
Captive held in clasp of rings!" Netherward his course again
Took that bitterest of boders.

There are not many passages finer than this in the poetry of scornful joy. The sudden outburst of con-

temptuous laughter, the Northern joy in vengeance, as if it were a sport (*plegode* is the word used), and mingled with it and uplifting it beyond mere vengeance, the Germanic clinging of the war-comrade to his chief, are nobly expressed. He scarcely thinks of himself (save for one characteristic touch of pleasure that he has won his high seat) in his rejoicing that his lord will be blithe and comforted of all his pain where he lies bound, for now he has his vengeance; and the triumphant return to hell is equally for his master's sake. There is no wish to linger in the bright air, no liking, such as Milton's Satan has, for Paradise. He returns at once, exulting that he has never bowed the knee—no, nor his chief—to God.

Adam and Eve are left, conscious of their fall, "and oft between them words of sorrow went." In Milton the pleasure of sin continues in lust of each other, and then, in reaction after the joy of the flesh, they feel their guilt. Mutual recrimination follows, and not till that is exhausted does repentance follow and prayer. But here the mocking of the fiend and the vanishing of Eve's vision of God bring about the sense of ruin instantly, and as instantly repentance. It is the Northern quickness of conscience. Other elements are now added to the situation—tenderness to one another and a passion of penitence. There is no mutual blame as in Milton, no lack of courtesy from the man to the woman, no subordinate relationship of the woman to the man, such as in Milton seems to license the reproofs of Adam. Adam here makes one reproach, not bitter but in sadness of love, and Eve's short answer is tender and still. She never ceases to be to him the most winsome of women. He thinks more of his own sin than of hers, and in

broken sentences, which, in the poet's way of expressing strong emotion, are not ended (the thoughts forcing themselves into fresh forms before their first form is completed, a manner Shakspere sometimes has), Adam breaks into a wild cry of desire to do the will of God such as we do not find in Milton. Here follows part of this scene, and it is worth while, for it is a touch of pure art, to call attention to the dark contrast now introduced to Eve's splendid vision, when Adam cries out—"Seest thou *now* Hell?"

Adam speaks—

791. "O, alas, thou, Eve, ill indeed hast thou marked out
For ourselves, our fate![1] See'st thou *now* the swarthy Hell,
Greedy there and ravening? Now the roaring grim of it
Mayst thou hear from hence! O, the Heaven-realm
How unlike that flame! . . . .

802. . . . . Hunger rends me now and thirst
Bitter in my breast; erst of both we were
Careless at all times.
How shall we live now or this land indwell,
If the wind come here from the West or out of East,
From the South or North? Swart upclimbs the cloud,
Falls the showery hail, swift and close from heaven:
Frost therewith is faring, fiercely cold it is!
Out of heaven at times, hot above us blazing,
Blinds us, bright, the sun. . . .

. . . .

814. But with us Almighty God
Wrath in spirit is!— O to what shall we become!
Now may long it rue me that I prayed the Lord of Heaven,
He the good All-Wielder, till He wrought thee here for me,
From these limbs of mine! Now thou'st led astray
Me into the wrath of God. So may I repent me now
Ever and for ever that mine eyes have seen thee."
Then again Eve spoke, sheenest of all women,
Loveliest of wives— . . . .

824. "Thou mayst it reproach me, Adam, my beloved,
In these words of thine; yet it may not worse repent thee,
Rue thee in thy mind than it rueth me in heart."
Then to her for answer Adam spoke again—
"O if I could know the All-Wielder's will,

[1] "You tried to play the part of God—and finely have you done it."

What I for my chastisement must receive from Him,
Thou should'st never see, then, anything more swift,—
though the sea within
Bade me wade the God of Heaven, bade me wend me hence
In the flood to fare— Nor so fearfully profound
Nor so mighty were the Ocean, that my mind should ever waver—
Into the abyss I'd plunge, if I only might
Work the will of God!"

"But naked like this we may not stay. Let us go into the covert of the holt. So they went mourning into that green wood, and there they fell to prayer, and every morning begged of God the Almighty that He would not forget them, but make known to them how henceforward they should live."

Here ends, at line 851, *Genesis B*. *Genesis A* now takes up the story. The well-known dialogue follows between Adam, Eve, and God in the garden, and though it is chiefly paraphrase, yet English touches enter in, enough to interest the hearers of the song. At last the scene closes, and in the pity of the writer there is left for comfort to these exiles, not only the fruits of the ground, but also—and it is a poet's consolation—"the roof of Heaven full of holy stars." "Behind their steps, with flaming sword, a holy watcher closed the Home of hope and happiness and joy." It is the same picture, but how different in power, as Milton drew—

They, looking back, all th' eastern side beheld
Of Paradise, so late their happy seat,
Wav'd over by that flaming brand; the gate
With dreadful faces throng'd and fiery arms.

CHAPTER XVIII

"EXODUS"

The poem of the *Exodus*, in the judgment of nearly all the critics, is by a single writer who had nothing to do with either the *Genesis* or the *Daniel*. It certainly stands alone, a complete and united whole. Even the episode which is intruded into the midst of the overthrow of the Egyptians, and which links the Israelites back to Abraham, is judged by Wülker and others to be by the same writer as the rest of the poem. If so, he is less of an artist than I should otherwise think him. The episode interrupts the story at the moment of its greatest interest, and is also excessively dull. I can scarcely conceive that a writer, who has some sense at least of unity and of choosing the best things to describe, can have been so dull. I should rather think that he or some one else wrote this piece as a separate song—as a kind of explanatory gloss—and that afterwards it was inserted by a stupid copyist into the poem. At any rate, this is not a poem which lends itself to critical disintegration. We are spared A, B, and C, and all their tribe.[1] The thing is a whole, and can be spoken of as such. It is taken up

[1] It has been done, however, by Strobl and others, but fortunately not so as to convince even the giants of disintegration.

with one event — with the Exodus — the beginning, progress and close of which it records; it moves swiftly and it ends well. Triumph begins it and triumph concludes it. In the midst is the trial of the Israelites and the destruction of the Egyptians.

The use of dialogue is not so common as in the *Genesis*; and when it is used it is brief and dry. On the other hand, the descriptive parts are long, and elaborately treated. We are by no means so close to human nature as we are in the *Genesis*. In this poem there is neither the simplicity of human feeling we find in *Genesis A*, nor the intellectual subtlety which belongs to *Genesis B*. Description, not passion, fills the lines; but the description is of a more careful and conscious finish than any in the *Genesis*. There is no actual battle such as that between Abraham and the kings of the East, but war and the circumstance of war are a great pleasure to this writer. The gathering of hosts, their march, ensigns and music, their ordering, their camping, the appearances and speeches of the chiefs, are drawn with so much clearness and personal interest that we feel that the writer had been an eager warrior. The real battle of the poem is the battle of God, and of the charging waves God wields, with Pharaoh and his host; and a fine piece of rough early work it is. God strikes, to let the water-destruction loose, the walls of wave on either hand "with an ancient sword."[1] It is no battle then of host with host, but of Jehovah Himself, wielding the elements as His weapons, with Pharaoh. A great number of curious, vigorous, and pictorial expressions, of which the sense is too often repeated, mark a time much later

[1] There is another rendering of this which I mention in its place.

than the quieter style of the earlier *Genesis*; and the freer handling of the Bible story, as if the writer had wholly rejected paraphrase in order to compose a work of art, is some proof of a later date. I am not sure that the poetry is not too forcible, too much desirous of effect, too flamboyant, if I may be allowed that term; and were this true of the whole, as it certainly is of some parts, it would be characteristic of a poetic period which had just taken its first turn towards sensationalism, but which, nevertheless, retained a great deal of the power of a simpler and more natural age of song. There is also no sense of regret or looking back in the poem, such as we find in Cynewulf's later work. Wherever in date we put *Judith*, we may put the *Exodus*. There is in both the same literary audacity and youthful exuberance. The *Exodus* opens with a celebration of Moses as the giver of laws and as a leader of men, beloved of God and consecrated to the deliverance of Israel. His future work in Canaan is briefly touched. Then we hear that it was in the desert of Sinai, before the Exodus, that the truth about creation was revealed to him; in what way "the Lord, mighty in victory, set the rounded circle of the earth and on high the firmament"; and at this point, after thirty lines of brief introduction, the poet sweeps instantly into his subject, and with a fine image which carries with it the central matter of the poem—

33. Then in that old time, and with ancient punishments,[1]
(Deeply) drenched with death was the dreadest of all folk.

First, the fate of the first-born is described, and the words used are full of interest—

By the death of hoard-wards wailing was renewed;
Slept the joyous song in hall spoiled of all its treasure!

[1] That is, with drowning—with the ancient doom of the Flood.

God had these man-scathers, at the mid of night,
Fiercely felled (in death)— heaps of the first-born.
Broken were the burg-defenders; far and wide the Bane strode;
Loathly was that people-Hater! All the land was gloomed
With the bodies of the dead; all the best were gone away.
Far and wide was weeping, world-delight was little,
Locked together lay the hands of the laughter-smiths![1]
47. . . . . Famous was that day
Over middle-earth when the multitude went forth.

Then follows the journey to Ethan, through "many a narrow pass and unknown ways, until, all armed, they came to the dark warriors (the Ethiopians), whose lands were covered with a helm of air, and whose march-fortresses were on the moorland."[2] Below them lay "the land of the Sun-men, the burnt-up city heights, and the folk embrowned with hot coals of heaven. But the holy God shielded the folk against the dreadful glare, o'erspread the blazing heaven with a veil, with a holy network.[3] It drank the fire-flame up, and the heroes were amazed; gladdest of troops were they. The o'ershading of the Day-Shield[4] wended (was drawn over) the welkin, for the God of wisdom had overtented the pathway of the Sun with a sail, though the men saw nothing of the mast-ropes nor

[1] This is one of the short and vivid phrases of this writer. All who made laughter sat with hands clasped in woe; and the word "laughter-smiths" is peculiar to this poet, who goes out of his way to be strange.

[2] *Mearchofu morheald*, "moor-holding mark-enclosures." This reads like a personal remembrance, perhaps of forts on the Northumbrian border.

[3] Another of this poet's favourite metaphors is that of a *Net*. Here the cloud-shield is like a woven web. At line 202 an army is *wael-net*, "slaughter-net."

[4] I suppose this is the concave firmament which is conceived of as a shield hung over the earth, under whose hollow the day abides. But it may be the sun itself, which in Icelandic poetry is sometimes called the shield of the sky. Grein translates *Daeg-scealdes*, "Tag-schiffes," perhaps to bring it into harmony with the strange and, I think, unique metaphor of *the sail* which follows. But the shield-image is, I think, right. I cannot but fancy from several phrases in the passage that the writer had heard of the velarium spread over the amphitheatre, and that he used the image of it here to express the mist-covering, the pillar of cloud, which protected the Israelites from the blaze of the sun. If this conjecture be right, it explains the ropes, the mast, and the mighty tent—"greatest of field-houses."

of the spars of the sail, nor how was fastened down that greatest of field-houses. When the third encampment brought comfort to the folk, all the army saw how high were uplifted the sacred sails! 'Twas a Lift-wonder, flashing light; and the people knew that the Lord had come Himself to mark their camping out."

This sail is the poet's shaping of the pillar of cloud which led them by day. "The sail directed their journey." He then describes the pillar of fire by night, and his imagination pictures its effect upon the armour of the host in the shadows of the night, and how it drove away from the hearts of the Israelities that terror of the waste-land of which we have heard in *Beowulf*—

111. Brilliantly
Stood above the shooters, sheen, a fiery light!
Shimmered then the shields, shadows slunk away.
All abysmal shades of night scarcely had the power
Then to hide their hollow cave,[1] Heaven's candle blazed (so bright).
'Twas a new night-warder who must of necessity
Watch above the warriors— that the wan-gray heath,
Through the terror of its waste, through its tempests, ocean-like,
Should not sunder ever, with a sudden grip, their souls.
Fiery flaming locks had that Forward-ganger;
Brilliant were his beams; bale and terror boded he
To the thronging host with the heat of flaming fire.[2]

At length "the sea-fastness at the limit of the land withstood the men." There they rested, while the

[1] That is, the fire-pillar was so bright that the deep shadows of night, flying to their cave, where they sheltered and lived by day—a common conception—could scarcely hide it from the attack of the light, or, prevent the light from discovering it.

[2] This looks like the description of a comet, done from memory or from sight. The fiery locks, the forward movement suggest this, and the boding of bale-terror is a part of the popular superstition of comets. I have looked into the *Chronicle*. In 678 "a comet (the Star Cometa) appeared in August and shone like a sunbeam every morning for three months." This then Caedmon saw. In 729 the entry is, "This year a comet appeared, and St. Ecgberht died at Ii." In 892 another is recorded: "Some men say in English that it is a hairy star, because a long radiance streams from it, sometimes on one, and sometimes on the other side."

"meat-thegns" waited on them with food. "At the sounding of the trumpet, the sailors (so the poet calls them) spread out the tents along the slopes of the mountains. The fourth encampment then, this resting-place of the shield-warriors, was by the Red Sea shore." While they rested, "dreadful tidings from inland came into their camp. The loathly foe was on their track. Hopeless grew their heart when they sighted clear, from the Southern ways, Pharaoh's fyrd a-forward ganging."

I have translated (vol. i. 181) the fine passage which follows, describing the coming of the Egyptian host—flags flying, trumpets sounding, the ravens circling above it, the wolves howling on its skirts, the haughty thegns riding in the van, the king with his standard in front of his thegns, fastening his visored helm, shaking his linked armour. Close beside him riding were his veteran comrades—hoary wolves of war, who greeted the battle, thirsting for the fray, faithful to their lord. The well-known horn gave order by its notes how the host should march along! So the dusky warriors heavily moved on, troop after troop, thousands and thousands of fighters. "But in the camp of Israel weeping was upraised, an awful evening song. Terrors stood round them and guarded the death-net,[1] as the noise (of marching hosts) came on and the frightful tidings flew." But he turns to contrast the glory of the host of Pharaoh with the dark fate that was at hand. Haughty, battle-brilliant were the warriors, but their doom was already dealt.

[1] The passage is obscure. I think it is the poet's reading of the 19th verse of the 14th chapter of Exodus: "And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them. It was a darkness to the Egyptians." A terror then stood round the host of the Israelites, and defended their army—"the slaughter-net." This phrase, in the writer's fantastic metaphor, may mean the interlocked array of the army.

The next part opens with the rousing of the Israelites. All night, hopeless, they sat on the hill-slopes in gleaming weeds of war, till Moses bade the earls—

216. With the blare of brass at the break of day
All the folk to gather and the frack to rouse,
Don their linkèd war-coats, dream of noble deeds,
Bear their blickering armour, with their banners call
Nearer to the strand the squadrons ! Swiftly then the watchmen
Now bethought them of the war-cry. Hastened was the host !
At the sound of shawms, on the sloping hills,
Struck their tents the sailors.

The twelve tribes are marshalled under their leaders, their numbers are counted ; the gray-headed warriors are left aside, "and the youths who could not yet guard their breast-net against the foe under the rim of the shield," nor had yet endured the "boastful play of the spear." Quick and eager were they all when the pillar of gleaming cloud showed them their way—

248. Then uprode their banner,
Brightest this of beams : all abode there, waiting,
Till the Pointer of their path, near the pourings of the sea,
Lightening on the lindens, broke the lift-enclosures.[1]

This is a fine picture, and the writer may have seen that which follows. It is the image of the English host-leader when the crisis of action drew near, and he made his war-speech. "Then to the forefront of the heroes leaped the war-chief, and upheaved his shield ; bade the folk-leaders silence the host, that all might

[1] This banner is, I suppose, the cloud-pillar, "the boder of their path" (*sīð-boda*). It comes in front of them in the morning, glowing bright, and its gleam is reflected on the linden-shields, as it breaks like the sun through the clouds—the air-fortresses—of the night. *Lyft-edoras*, "air-enclosures." *Edor* is a fence, such as was thrown round Bamboro' ; and becomes that which was fenced in, a town or a fortress. I wish I could think that the Boder, the herald of their journey, was the sun, and that this was a description of his bursting through the wall of night-clouds upon the horizon, and lighting up the shields of the host as they stand upon the seashore.

hear. 'Have no fear,' he cried, 'though Pharaoh bring vast armies of sworded warriors.'" God will overthrow them. And with scorn and faith he uses, as I think, the same bold figure that Keats uses when Lorenzo rides with the brothers—"And those two brothers with their murdered man,"—he calls the whole proud Egyptain host, dead men. "Nor will ye dread these dead troops. The loan of their life is taken from them. "High-hearted and high-famed is Abraham's God, and His hand is mighty."

At this Moses turns to the sea, and in the vivid realistic way of this writer, Moses, while he divides the sea, describes its doings. We see, we almost hear, the sea retreat—

278. Hearken, look ye now, most beloved of folk,
(See) how I have stricken, I and this right hand,
With a green rod Ocean's deep !
Up the surge is faring, swiftly is it working
Water to a fortress-wall ! Now the ways are dry;
Ashen-gray the army-paths, opened out the main,
Old profounds of sea ; I have never heard
Over all mid-garth men have fared thereon :
(Lo) the fields of foam,[1] sea-foundations fettered down,
That from everlasting, on unto this instant,
Waves have vaulted o'er. (See) the south wind 's swept away
Blowing of the bath-way ; burst asunder is the Deep !
(Now) the ebb's spewed forth the sand.
295. Now the Lord has lifted up
To a shield-like mountain all the Red Sea-streams.
There [2] before you are the walls ; fair are they uptowered !
Wondrous is this wave-upfaring to the Welkin's roof.

The march begins, tribe by tribe, each in order, with their banners and their devices. "They raised their white lindens and their standards on the shore. First

[1] The foamy fields here, are not the foam-covered surface of the sea, but the wide path laid bare across the sea on which the foam lies white. For *Saelde saegrundas*, some read "salt sea-depths"; but it is not apart from Teutonic myth to think of the bottom-rock of ocean as riveted to its place.

[2] I have ventured on this translation of *syndon þá foreweallas.*

went the fourth tribe and waded into the wave-stream, o'er the greenish depth. It was the tribe of Judah. Eagerly and alone it led on that unknown way. These upreared over their shields, above the crowd of spears, a lion all of gold. The greatest of folk bore the boldest of beasts. No insult to their leader did they ever bear when in the war they lifted the spear-wood." In the van, they ran to onset—

329. Bloody were the bill-tracks and a rush of battle-strength,
Grind on grind of visored-helms— there where Judah drove.

After them went the sons of Reuben — "sailors proudly moving, shields these sea-vikings (*saewîcinge*, the word may suggest a date for the poem) bore over the salt marsh." Next came the sons of Simeon; "their ensigns waved over their spear-faring, and their shafts were wet with dew. Then the rustling murmur of the day-dawn came to them over the moving of the ocean; God's beacon rose, bright shining morn."

At this moment the episode of the descent of the Israelites from Noah and Abraham is introduced, and to the spoiling of the action of the poem. The sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham, "father of free-born men," closes it; and it is followed by the two parts which end the poem—the overthrow of the Egyptians, and the triumph of the Israelites on the farther shore. The poet has put all his force into the description of the Overwhelming, but in the effort he shows that he is not a great artist. He has not been able to choose out of all the images that have occurred to him the best fitted to make the reader create the scene for his own imagination. He has not been able to introduce the catastrophe so as to double its horror, nor so to

end it as to leave the horror of it in the mind. It is not done as Æschylus has done the outbreak of all the elemental forces on Prometheus. Our writer says over and over again the same thing in different words, using that cumulative method, which is sometimes effective, but which is, of all methods, the most dangerous an inferior artist can use. It leads him to violence of expression, to repetition of words and images. He thinks he will be heard for his much speaking. He is heard, but he wearies the hearers. As an example of what I mean, and because there is also a detached vigour and fury in some of the repeated descriptions, with a few but startling images, I translate part of the overwhelming of the host—

446. Then afeared was the folk, terror from the flood o'ercame
These deep-troubled souls ; ocean threatened them with death.
All besteamed with blood [1] heaved the billows mountain high ;
Foul gore spat the sea ; on the surges clamour rose ;
Full of weapons was the water ; slaughter-vapour rose.
454. . . . . Darkened then against them
Baleful billows' welter ! Never back did any one
Of the host return to home, but behind them Wyrd
Wrapt them with her wave. Where the ways had lain
Mad of mood the sea was ! Drowned the might (of Egypt) lay !
Then upsurged the streams ; storm (of cries) went up
High into the Heavens— greatest of host-wailings !
Shrieked aloud the loathly foes, and above, the lift grew black :
Blood was borne along the flood with the bodies of the doomed !
Shattered were the shield-burgs ![2] This, of sea-deaths greatest,
Beat upon the firmament.

The next lines repeat the same picture. A fine phrase speaks of the ice-cold sea (once wont with the salt waves to wander over its ever-during foundation) returning as a naked boder of evil, as a herald coming on foot filled with a foeman's wrath, to fall upon the

[1] This is the phrase used in the runes of the Ruthwell Cross, on the relic in St. Gudule, and in the *Vision of the Rood*.

[2] The sea-walls that sheltered them.

Egyptians. Another describes the "blue air"—that is, the dark purple thunder-clouds (for the sky could not be "azure" in this awful hour)—as blent with gouts of gore; and another the inbursting sea threatening blood-terrors to the Egyptians.

Again and again, in anxiety to realise the scene by repetition, we see the poet struggling in vain to find the brief words with which a great poet would have left the right and awful impression on our mind. Even when he comes to the last, the real matter, he fails, yet his final effort deserves translation—

481. Rushed all foam the flood, sank the fated down,
On the Lake-land [1] tumbled! All the lift was troubled!
Smashed, the strong walls fell, burst the surges in,
Melted were the towers of sea, when the Mighty smote
Heroes strong as trees; [2] all that stately people.
489. . . . . Wild grew Ocean then.
Up it soared, and in it slid! [3] Terrors stood about them,
Welled the death-wounds forth! Fell the wondrous road [4]
High from Heaven down, handiwork of God.
Then He smote the flood-defences, foamy-breasted (walls),[5]
Sea that sheltered them no more, with His sword of old;
So that, by its dint of death, slept the doughty men,
Slept that crowd of sinners! Fast encompassed there,

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[1] That is, the Ocean which had become firm as land; but there is another reading, "the Lake (the Ocean) road."

[2] *Wer-beam*, "tree of defence," hence warrior; but why not men like trees, strong or tall as trees?

[3] That is, the wall of water on either side, leaped upwards and fell inwards; as a retreating wave meeting the incoming wave becomes a leaping ridge of spires and then tumbles inwards. *Up âteah, on sléap*, is quite excellent. *Egesan stôdon*, "terrors stood," is nothing more than a conventional phrase; there were terrors about them; but its original use goes back to the time when terrors were thought of as personages.

[4] *Wit-rôd* (*râd*), *Zauberstrasse*, says Dietrich, which I have adopted. *Wite-rod*, "the rod of punishment," is the other reading; and this seems to parallel what follows.

[5] Or take *fâmigbôsma* (as Grein) as the nominative, and translate: "Then the foamy-bosomed smote the flood-wards"; *i.e.* the waves, coming in crested with foam and driven by the wind, smote on the walls of sea which guarded on either side the path. The other reading, which makes God strike with His old sword the foaming walls of sea, is, in my opinion, not only the most poetical, but the most in accord with the rest of this poet's work.

Pale as flood, the war-men fled out of their souls,
When the brown Upweltering overwhelmed them all,—
Highest that of haughty waves! All the host sank deep.

"So did the mightier Warden of the sea-flood drown all the manhood of Egypt. With His death-grip, wrathful and dreadful, He decided the battle. Nor was one left to tell through the burgs that most baleful of tales, to tell to their women the death of the hoard-wards; sea-death swallowed the mighty hosts. They fought against God."

This is the end of the Overthrow. The close of the poem runs on for seventy-four lines. It tells how Moses, on the farther shore, gave everlasting redes to men; and the poet turns aside to preach a little sermon to his hearers of the joy of the grace of God; how lightly it is lost by sin, and how eternal a pit is hell; how near at hand are the arch-thieves, old age, and early death; and last, the Judgment Day. Then Moses speaks of the glory of God the leader of the Hebrews, of the lands and honour they shall win. And when he ended, "the folk rejoiced, the trumpets of victory sang, the banners arose to that fair sound." They looked on the sea, and all bloody seemed to them the foaming wave through which they had moved with their sarks of the battle. The men sang of glory, the women in their turn. That greatest of folk-troops sang their war song—"

579. Then was easily to see many an Afric maid,
On the Ocean's shore, all adorned with gold.
584. And the Sea-escaped began from their seines to share,
On the jetsam of the waves,[1] jewels, treasures old,

[1] *On yðlâfe*, "on the leaving of the waves," that is, "on the shore." *Jetsam*, a word half French, half Scandinavian, that which is cast overboard or, after a wreck, by mariners on the coast. I venture to use it then for the sand which makes the beach, which is cast up by the waves.

Bucklers and breast-armour. Justly fell to them,
Gold and goodly web, Joseph's store of riches,
Glorious wealth of Warriors ; but its Wardens [1] lay
On the stead of death, strongest of all nations.

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[1] *Werigend*, "the defenders, the wardens" ; hence those who had, as masters, kept guard over the Hebrews ; their enslavers, or here, perhaps, their pursuers. Or, it might refer back to the treasures of the Egyptians, "the defenders of these treasures lay dead," and, as the Egyptians are throughout the poem called the hoard-wards, this is the most likely meaning.

CHAPTER XIX

THE "DANIEL" AND "CHRIST AND SATAN"

THE *Daniel* follows the *Exodus* in the Junian Manuscript, and is in the same handwriting as the *Genesis* and *Exodus*. It is a long poem of 765 lines, and its end is wanting. The writer wished, I think, to connect it with the *Exodus*, and there is an introduction of some forty verses which takes up the history of the Israelites at the Exodus, and sketches it as far as the appearance of Nebuchadnezzar on the scene. After that the poet paraphrases, with some closeness, and with much dryness, those portions of the book of Daniel which have to do with the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar, the story of the three children, and the feast of Belshazzar. There is scarcely any dialogue to enliven the story, and though the text of the Bible is treated with some freedom, the freedom is unrelieved by a single touch of imagination. It is a dreary poem. How any one in the world can say, as some have said, that the *Daniel* was written by the same poet who wrote the *Exodus* or the *Genesis*, passes belief. The only passages which have any life are those which are borrowed from the Song of the Three Children in the Apocrypha, and this, with other interpolations, has been partly worked into the *Daniel*

from the *Azarias* of the Exeter Book.[1] I have already drawn attention to the threefold translation—varied into three different aspects of nature—of the phrase which concerns the cooling wind which blew in the fiery furnace. This is the one oasis in the desert of *Daniel.* As to its date, some say that it was written after Ælfric, others that it belongs to the time of Ælfred. Its inferiority makes us say that it does not matter a pin when it was written.

It is another matter when we come to the second part of the poems which pass under the name of Caedmon, and which are in a different and later handwriting from the first part. Grein has given to this collection of psalm-like poems the name of *Christ and Satan.* They are a kind of *Paradise Regained.* They treat, first, of the Fall of the Angels; secondly, of the Harrowing of Hell, of the Resurrection, Ascension, Pentecost, and the Judgment Day; and thirdly, of the Temptation. The first, second, and third poems are not (and the best German critics agree in this) one poem, but three fragments of separate poems. Groschopp, who has treated of them in a distinct work, considers them to be three fragments taken out of one united poem, which a later "restorer" has attempted to bring into a unity of his own. There are but few who think that he has proved his point. The great interest of his labour lies in this—that his investigation of the language of the poems makes it more than probable that they are older than the rest of those contained in the Junian MS. He even supposes, from the antique form of the Anglo-Saxon, and from the

[1] The text supposes that the first seventy-five lines of the *Azarias* were worked into the *Daniel.* But the more probable supposition is that the *Azarias* was a *rifacimento* of a portion of the *Daniel.*

resemblance of the subjects treated to those mentioned in Baeda's account of Caedmon's works, that we may have here some of the work of the Caedmon of Baeda.[1] Wülker disagrees with him, and thinks that Ten Brink's view that the *Christ and Satan* is later than Cynewulf much more probable. The extreme simplicity, directness, and rude passion of the narrative, make it likely, in my opinion, that this set of poems is earlier than the rest of the book, except, perhaps, some portions of *Genesis*. Dialogue, which has died out in *Exodus* and *Daniel*, and the representation of a situation in long speeches rather than in description, return upon us in these poems.[2] The human interest is thus made greater; nor are the characters ill-sustained. They are, at least, alive; and this is especially true of Satan, whose character, as painted here, is more various, more the object of the writer's pity, more full of regret for all he has lost, even for those he has led with him to ruin, than the Satan of *Genesis B*. The poetry has a clear clang, a sharp descriptiveness which is nearer to oral than to written verse. After the dreary waste of *Daniel* it is a comfort to come upon this rugged, varied and somewhat primæval mountain side of song.

The description of hell has some new elements in it, and these seem, though I do not wish to make too much of this, to belong to a time when the Northern idea of the realm of the dark death-goddess Hel had begun to be influenced by the Christian Hell. If

[1] The first three parts of the first poem on the Fall of the Angels, as if they were separately made, end with three similar hymns of praise. They are like three lays, into which a Scôp might divide his one subject, to be sung on three separate evenings; and such may have been the form of some of Caedmon's religious songs. The others, too, may be separate *Cantatas*, within a general paraphrase of the history of redemption.

[2] This has, however, nothing to do with their supposed antiquity.

that conception mingled at all with the hell now before us, we might be able to suggest a conjectural date for this poem. The Northern *Helle* is not a place of punishment or filled with fire, nor is it dwelt in by the evil only. All go down to it save the heroes who die in battle—even Brynhild and Balder. It lies low down to the North, in a pale, mist-world (*Niflheimr*), covered with night, very cold, swept with winds; with gates, a great hall where the goddess dwells, a fountain in the midst where dragons and serpents lie, and twelve roaring rivers, gloomy and joyless. *Muspell* is the fire-world in the South, and no human beings ever pass into it. Various fragments of this conception appear in the hell of this poem. Fire-breathing dragons are at its gates, and serpents swarm in it. There is a hall in it, in which Satan wanders like Hel. It is cold and dark, and over it broods abysmal cloud. Those who wander in it are black-visaged. These are the heathen fragments. The Christian hell—in which the name of the goddess was changed into the name of a place—is made a realm of fire, like Muspell, but unlike Muspell is filled with human souls as well as demons. This place is vigorously described in these poems. It is sunk deep in the lowest abyss, "underneath high Nesses," a new image in the description of hell. This is twice repeated, and links the conception of the place to the mediæval notion of the last pit of hell. Below these, as if on their strand, the fiends sometimes assemble and mourn. The cliffs stand round a "deep, tossing, and weltering sea of fire, greedy and ravenous—a loathsome lair." This heaving and leaping sea is Hell's floor—"an ocean mingled with venom and with venom kindled." Serpents move in it and twine round naked men; adders and dragons dwell in it (in *Judith*

hell is called a "hall of serpents"); its wind-swept hall is filled with anguish. The devils wander to and fro in it howling in woe; and twelve miles beyond the gates of this narrow realm of hate the gnashing of their teeth is heard in the abyss of space. The gates are huge, dragons sit at them, and they are fast shut and immovable, save when Christ comes upon them, when they are battered down to the noise of thunder at dawn. When Satan speaks, fire and poison fly from his lips with his words, and flicker through hell, and he is as restless in hell as he is said to be on earth in the book of Job. The very distance from Palestine is given. Hell is 100,000 miles below the Mount of the Temptation. This is as definite as Dante. Much of this is freshly imagined, and its possible nearness to heathen thought gives it a greater interest than the later mediæval conceptions possess.

The first poem, *The Fall of the Angels*, begins with a praise of God as Creator, and with a sketch of the fall of Satan into hell. Then the "Old One" wails for his loss of heaven, and for the fiery ruin in which he lives. He is far more convinced of his sin than the audacious devil of *Genesis*. "I may never hope," he cries, "to have again the better home I lost through pride." A new motive is now introduced. In the *Genesis* all his companions love him and are on his side. Here they reproach and scorn him. "With lying words thou hast deceived us; God thou wast; thyself wast the Creator—so thou saidst; a wretched robber art thou now, fast bound in bands of fire." Another curious phrase is the following, where we meet with the Son of the devil, as if in heaven he had imitated God and sent his son forth as master. "Full surely thou saidst that thy son was the creator of man;

all the greater are now thy pains." Again Satan takes up his complaint, and repeats in different phrases the same motive—regret for heaven, hopelessness of return, the present horrors of hell. A third time he takes up the same cry; and then a fourth time, the words flying from him in sparks likest to poison, he bursts out into a passionate agony of vain repentance—

164. O thou Helm of banded hosts! O high glory of the Lord!
O thou might of the great Maker! O thou Middle-Earth!
O thou dazzling day-light! O delight of God!
O ye angel hosts! O thou upper Heaven!
O that I am all bereft of the Everlasting Joy!
That I may not with my hands reach unto the Heaven,
Never with these eyes of mine upwards look again;
Even with mine ears ever hear again
Sounding clear the clang of the clarions of God.

"Woe and torment, exile must I bear, wander a wide wandering in wretchedness and care, for I strove to drive from His throne the Lord of Hosts." This is the first song in the poem, and it ends with an outburst on the poet's part of warning to men, and of a prophecy of the joy of heaven.

The second song of the poem begins at line 225, and is a repetition of the first, save for the expression of Satan's vague hope of God giving him back his seat in heaven; and it ends as before with a religious psalm of the poet's. A third song begins to the same motive at line 316, and the whole poem ends with another hymn of the bliss of heaven at line 365. These three songs are like three lyrical poems sung at different times to the same theme, and placed in the manuscript one after the other.

The second complete poem of this part of the Junian Caedmon is on the *Harrowing of Hell* and begins at line 366. It is a subject, as I have said, which always attracts the imagination. In this treat-

ment of it, some things are novel and interesting, and seem to belong to an earlier and more simple time than that in which the separate poem in the Exeter Book on the Descent into Hell was written. Speeches rather than dialogue fill it, and its scenery is vivid and well arranged.

It begins with a sketch of the fall of Lucifer into hell, and then breaks abruptly into the subject. Anguish came on hell, thundercrash before the Judge, as he bowed and shattered the gate of hell, but joy was in the heart of men (that is, of the good spirits in prison) when they saw the Saviour. But full of horror were the fiends, wailing far and wide through the windy hall. "Terrible is this, since the Storm has come to us, the Hero with his following, the Lord of Angels. Before him shines a lovelier light than we have ever seen, since we were on high among the Angels. So will now our pains be deeper." Then —for now the poet repeats his motive in order to introduce the speech of Eve,—then came the Angel-cry, loud thunder at the break of day. The Lord had overcome his foes—war-feud was open on that morning, when he came to lead forth the chosen souls of Adam's race. Yet Eve could not look upon the glow of joy till she had spoken, and her speech occupies nearly forty lines. It may mark the early origin of the poem, that the important place among the souls in Hades is given to a woman. She tells the story well; she makes picture after picture of hell before the Saviour's coming. He listens courteously to the end. She begins with the story of their fall, speaking for Adam and herself. "Our guilt was bitterly recompensed; thousands of winters have we wandered in this hot hell, dreadfully burning. But now, I

beseech thee, Prince of Heaven, that I with all my kinsfolk may go up from hence. Three nights ago came a servant of the Saviour (this is Judas) home to hell. Fast is he now in prison, yet he told us that God Himself would enlighten this house of hell, our dwelling." Then, from this happy invention of Judas, his message and his fate, she turns to describe how the news was received by all the Old Testament saints waiting in hell—

> 432. Then uplifted each himself, on his arm he set himself,
> On his hands he leant. Though the hellish Horror
> Full of awfulness appeared, yet was every one
> Midst their pains delighted, since the Prince of men
> Willed their home to seek, help to bring to them.

Then she reached out her hands and besought the King of Heaven through the office of Mary. "Thou wert in truth, O my beloved Lord, born into the world of my daughter, now it is plain that thou art God."

She ended, and Christ, driving the fiends deeper into hell, took upwards with him all the host of the redeemed. "That was fair indeed, when they came to their fatherland, and with them the Eternal to his glorious burg. Holy prophets put forth their hands and lifted them into home," and they sat down to feast. Then, as in an assembly of English nobles, Christ rose and made his speech to them—and the phrase with which he begins recalls the Witan: "Wise spirits" he says, and in his turn he gives another account of the fall and of its punishment: "O 'twas woe to me," he cries, "that the work of my hands should endure the chain of the prison-house. Then I came on earth and died. Well it was for you that the warriors pierced me with spears upon the gallows tree." So spake the Ward of Glory on the morning of the Resurrection.

The poem turns then to describe the Resurrection, the Ascension, Pentecost, and the Last Judgment, and each fragment closes with a separate outbreak of religious warning and joy. As in the previous part, this similar ending suggests that these were each isolated songs, here collected and placed together by a later editor. There is nothing in them of any special worth.

At line 665, another fragment of a separate poem, inserted out of its historical place, relates a part of the story of the Temptation. It is only remarkable for the mocking speech of Christ when he repels the tempter on the mountain, such a speech as an English warrior might have made to his foe: "Go, accursed, to the den of punishment, but I bid thee take no jot of hope to the burghers of Hell; but promise them the deepest of all sorrows; go down, and know how far and wide away is dreary Hell. Measure it with thine hands, and grip against its bottom. Go, till thou knowest all the round of it; from above to the abyss measure how broad is the black mist of it. Then wilt thou understand that thou fightest against God. Go with speed, and before two hours are passed, thou shalt have measured thine allotted house!"

So he fell down to dreadful pains—down towards hell, and first he measured with his hands the torment and the woe, and then (as he descended) the lurid flame smote upwards and against him, and then he saw the captives lie below him in hell, and then the howl of the demons reached his ear when they saw the unholy one return, and then he on the bottom stood. And when he was there it seemed to him that to hell door from the place where he had been was 100,000 miles by measure. And he looked round on the ghastly

place, and there rose a shriek from all the lost, and they cried aloud to the Lord of their kingdom—

733. There! be ever thou in evil! Erst thou wouldst not good.

With this fine passage close the poems that bear the name of Caedmon. Whatever their several dates be, they are a noble beginning to English song. Whoever be their several writers, they owe their impulse to the man who on that night took care of the cattle in the monastery of Hild. Honour from all the English race, from all the poets, greatest of the English race, is due to his name. He was the first (and I borrow some of Ebert's phrases) who, like a Scôp singing heroic tales, sang to the people in their own tongue the tales of the Old Testament and the subject-matters of Christianity. He showed how this new material might be assimilated by the genius of the people. He made the bridge which led to the artistic poetry which begins, after him, to handle the same subjects. The old singers of heathendom, crossing it, became the new singers of Christianity.

CHAPTER XX

"JUDITH" AND OTHER CAEDMONIAN POEMS

The followers of Caedmon were many, Baeda says, and the phrase proves that there was a number of Northumbrian poems on Christian subjects at the time of Baeda's death in 735. Some of these poets adopted, no doubt, Caedmon's method, which may have been hymnic, and among them there were simple paraphrasers of the Sacred Books, men who sang only for the monastery and not for the mead-hall. But there were others, as we see plainly from the *Exodus*, who, while they followed him, passed far beyond simple narration. They conceived their subject in somewhat of a Saga fashion, and recited their work to please the warriors, the king, the thegns, and the freemen as they sat in the hall at the mead. The religious element is of course introduced, and the poem, half war, half religion, touching heathendom with one hand and Christianity with the other, equally excited and instructed the feasters.

Of this type is the *Judith*: a poem of the cycle of Caedmon, written, it is most likely, in Northumbria, and which we may perhaps roughly date at about the middle of the eighth century. Had this long and important piece of work been by Caedmon, as some have

said, it would not, I think, have been omitted from Baeda's catalogue of the poet's work, nor passed over without a distinct reference, among the *plurimae sacrae scripturae historiae* which he ascribes to Caedmon. Moreover, the form in which the poem is cast, its unity of story which can be discerned even in the portion left to us, its careful composition and its rhythmical changes[1] bear witness to a time when poetry had added to its early simplicity a more artistic method, such as, for example, we find in the *Exodus*.

The same uncertainty as to date which belongs to the greater number of Anglo-Saxon poems belongs also to *Judith*. The dates given by well-known scholars range over three hundred years, from the seventh to the tenth century. This is enough to show that we have no clear criterion in our hands. The various conjectures will be found drawn together, with an exhaustive treatment of the poem itself, in a book written by Mr. Cook, who puts forward an interesting suggestion with regard to the origin of the *Judith*.[2] He thinks it was composed in gratitude for the deliverance of Wessex from the fury of the Northmen, and dedicated to Judith, the stepmother of Ælfred, the great-granddaughter of Charles the Great, whom, in her charming youth, Æthelwulf brought to England as his wife in the year 856. Her name, her joyous reception by the people and her beauty suggested the

[1] The writer of *Judith*, like the writer of *Genesis B*, has frequent recourse to those long swelling lines when he is excited, which, while retaining the three alliterative stresses—two in the first half of the line, one in the second; sometimes only one in the first half—allowed the poet to insert at the beginning of each half line as many unaccented syllables as he chose. Hence the third letter-stress is almost always on the last word but one of the line.

[2] *Judith*. Albert S. Cook, Professor of English Language and Literature in the University of California. Boston, Heath and Co.

choice of the subject, and it may have been written by Swithhun, Bishop of Winchester, Æthelwulf's friend and teacher. The arguments by which he strengthens this theory deserve consideration, but the poem still remains for me a Northumbrian poem of the beginning or the middle of the eighth century; after Baeda's death, and before the times of anarchy and decay. There is no melancholy note in the poem. It exists only in a single manuscript, the same in which the *Beowulf* has been handed down to us. The several parts of the poem are headed with numbers, and we possess fourteen lines of section ix., and the whole of sections x. xi. xii. These together reach to 350 lines. The other books are lost — that is, about three-fourths of the poem. It was then an important piece of about 1400 lines in all, and I say again that had a poem of this length and power been in existence while Baeda was alive, he would probably have mentioned it when he spoke of the followers of Caedmon, or as Caedmon's own, had Caedmon written it.

The tenth book begins with a vigorous description of a great drinking feast given by Holofernes which lasts the whole day till all the Captains are furiously drunk. As to Holofernes, he seems to be drawn direct from some English chief, well known for drinking prowess. "He laughed and shouted and raged so that all his folk heard far away how the stark-minded stormed and yelled, full of fierce mirth and mad with mead." He bids Judith be led to his tent. A golden fly-net hangs between his bed and the drinking chamber, so that he could see the guests, but they might not look on him. Drunk, he fell on his bed, and Judith steps forth, with plaited tresses. And she held a sharp

sword, hardened by the storms (*scurum*) of battle, "drew it from the sheath, and called on the Ward of Heaven—God the creator, spirit of consolation." The prayer is nobly wrought, brief and forceful, full of passion—passion for her country and her God, passion of the woman brought so near to shame. "Let me hew down," it ends, "this lord of murder! Venge thou, O God, that which is so angry in me, the burning in my heart." The slaughter is then carefully described. Her cleverness, as she seizes the heathen by the hair and fits him for the blow; her strength, as she drives the glittering sword half through his throat, and then again smites the heathen dog, half dead, till his head rolled out upon the floor, are as vigorously hewn into the verse as the sword into Holofernes. "There lay the foul carcase, but the spirit turned to go to the deep abyss, and was battened down, with pangs, with worms enwound in that snake-hall."

Book xi. then takes Judith and her "pale-cheeked maid," with the head in their bag, out of the sleeping camp, till they see the "shining walls of fair Bethulia. There sat on the ramparts the burghers, watching, and Judith called to them, and the folk ran to the gate, men with women, crowding together; stormed and raced, old and young in thousands, to meet the divine maid." She bids her girl unwrap the bloody head, and Joan of Arc could not have made a more impassioned, a more warlike speech—

177. Clearly may ye now, conquering heroes strong;
O ye leaders of the people, (looking) stare upon the head
Of this heathen lord of fight, of this loathliest (of men),
Holofernes, now unliving,
Who of all men made most of murderous woes for us!
185. . . . . By the help of God
I have wrenched his life away. Now will I bid each of you
Each burg-dweller to the battle.

189. Fit ye for the fighting ! When the God of first beginnings,
Merciful and monarch,[1] eastward makes arise
Bright the blaze of day, bear your lindens forward then,
Shield-board sheltering your breast, byrnies for your raiment,
Helmets all a-shining, midst that horde of scathers ;
Felling the folk-leaders with the flashing swords,
Chieftains cursed for death ! (Courage !) all your foes
To the death are doomed ! Ye shall have dominion,
Gain a glory in the battle ; as the greatest Lord
Hath a handsel given through mine hand to you.

Then the host of swift ones speedily was readied ; all the warriors bold as kings, all the comrades, bore their victory banners, fared into the fight ; forward in right line they moved ; all the heroes under helm from the holy burg at the breaking of the day. Din there was of shields, loud they rang ; and the gaunt wolf of the weald rejoiced, and the black raven, greedy of slaughter. Well they knew both of them that the heroes thought to count out death to the doomed ;[2] and upon their track flew the Earn, hungry for its fodder ; all its feathers dewy ; dusky was its sallow coat ; horny-nebbed, he sang his battle-song. Swiftly stepped the chiefs of battle to the field of carnage, with the hollow lindens sheltered. . . . Then they let, with valiancy, showers of their arrows fly, adders of the battle from their bows of horn, hard-headed bolts. Loudly stormed the warriors fierce, and their spears they sent, right into the host of hard ones . . . So the Hebrews showed their foes what the sword-swing was.

By this time the Assyrian host is roused, and Book xii. relates how the messengers came from the outskirts of the host to the chief thegns, and how they roused the standard-bearing warrior ; and how they

[1] *Arfaest cyning*, "glorious king" ; but *ar* has also the sense of compassion.
[2] Or, perhaps, "to furnish for them their fill on the doomed."

took counsel whether they dared to wake Holofernes. Too much at this crisis is made of this poor motive. They gather round their lord's tent. No noise awakens him. At last, one bolder than the rest breaks in, and lo! pale lay his gold-giver on the bed, robbed of life. "Here lies," he cries, "headless, hewn down by sword, our Upholder." All their weapons fall; they fly; behind them urges a mighty folk; the Hebrew heroes "hew a path with swords through the press, thirsty for the onset of the spear." So fell in dust the nobles of Assyria, left to "the will of the wolves, fodder for the fowls of slaughter." Then is told the gathering of the spoil. "Proud, with plaited locks, the Hebrews brought precious treasures to Bethulia's shining burg—helms and hip-seaxes, bright-gray byrnies, and panoplies of warriors inlaid with gold. And to Judith, wise and fair of face, they gave the sword and bloody helm, and eke the huge byrnie of Holofernes all with red gold embossed, and his armlets and bright gems. For all this she said praise to the Lord of every folk." Then the poem makes a fair ending, tender and gracious and touched with that love of nature which we have so often found among the English—

347. To the Lord beloved, for this,
Glory be for widening ages! Wind and lift He shaped of old,
Sky above and spacious earth, every one of the wild streams,
And the Æther's jubilation— through His own delightfulness.

Judith is a good, ringing piece of English verse, but I cannot agree with those who place it in the highest rank. It lacks imagination, and its finest passages are somewhat conventional. A man, whom we should call to-day a cultivated man, wrote it. Its form and arrangement are therefore good; its metre and lan-

guage are excellent, but the creative spirit of poetry does not often say, as the poem moves on, "Let there be light!" Nevertheless, if we wish to compare the poetry of the time before Ælfred with that of the age which followed him, we may understand the vast difference between them by reading the Homily of Ælfric on Judith. That homily is in a loose alliterative verse. If our *Judith* touches a prosaic note now and again, so that we are jarred, Ælfric's verse-homily is nothing but prose. It must be a difficult task to persuade oneself that the date of *Judith* lies in the tenth century.

There still remains to complete this account of the Caedmon cycle of poems the runes upon the Cross of Ruthwell in Annandale, the dying song of Baeda, and the short verse quoted in the letters of Winfrid.[1] Of the separate *Azarias* I have already said enough.

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[1] The verse in the letters of Winfrid is scarcely worth mentioning. It is quoted in a letter, not from Boniface himself, but from a monk, and I give Kemble's account of it below. At least it is dated.

"On passing some time lately with my friend, Professor Schmeller of Munich, my attention was called by him to an ancient Saxon proverb quoted in an epistle of St. Boniface, which he had read in the 3d vol. of Pertz' Thesaurus, just published. As it stood in Pertz, it ran thus—

"Oft daed lata domae for eldit si gi sitha gahuum suuylt it þiana.

"A very old MS. copy of the same epistle in the Munich library, and like that from which Pertz printed, written in Germany, gave the same, as follows—

"Oft daed latadom aefor eldit si gisitha gahuuem suuylt it þiana.

"On translating this from its half-German, half-Northumbrian dialect, into good plain West Saxon (Anglo-Saxon), I arranged the lines as follows—

"Oft daedlata
dóme foryldeð
sigesiða gehwaem:
swylteð ðy ána.

"'Oft doth the dilatory man with justice lose by his delay in every successful undertaking: therefore he dieth lonely.' As this was written by Boniface, or to call him by his Anglo-Saxon name, Winfrið, in the early half of the eighth century, it is one of the earliest pieces of Saxon poetry on record. It shares the character of the Saxon proverbs generally; viz. that of a solemn gnomic saying,

The Runes have been attributed to Caedmon, and the Cross to the seventh century ; and Stephens translated the runic inscription on the top of the Cross as "Caedmon me fawed," that is, Caedmon had, he thought, himself made the verses on the Cross.[1] But the Cross, so far as its make goes, might have been set up during

treasured probably as a wise rule of life. Winfrið quotes it as well known, and therefore as earlier than his own period. On this account it may perhaps be placed by the side of the verses cited by Baeda in his last moments.— . . ." J. M. Kemble, in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1836, June, p. 611.

[1] It is possible that the inscriber took some phrases out of a poem of Caedmon's which had been worked over afterwards by another writer, perhaps by Cynewulf; and meant by his inscription, "These lines are by Caedmon." But it is just as likely that *Caedmon*, which, odd as it is, may have become a Northumbrian name, is the name of the sculptor of the Cross. On the Anglo-Saxon Cross at Brussels the maker's name is written : "*Drahmal* me worhte." I place the translation of the Ruthwell Runes side by side with their parallels from the *Dream*—

Ruthwell Cross.	*Dream of Cross.*
geredae hinae god almechttig þa he walde on galgu gistiga modig fore *allae* men *b*ug	39. Ongyrede hine þa geong haeleð (þaet waes god aelmihtig) strang and stiðmod; gestah he on gealgan heanne modig on manigra gesyhðe. . . .
5. ic riicnae kyninge heafunaes hlafard haelda ic *ni* darstae bismaeradu ungcet men ba aet gad*r*e ic *waes* blodi bistemi*d* bigot*en of*	44. Rod waes ic araered: ahof ic ricne cyning heofona hlaford, hyldan me ne dorste. . . . . 48. Bysmeredon hie unc butu aetgaedere. Eall ic waes mid blode bestemed begoten of þaes guman sidan. . . .
Crist waes on rodi hweþrae þer fusae fearran cwomu aeþþilae til anum ic þaet al be*heald* s*are* ic waes miþ sorgu*m* gi*d*rae*f*id h*n*ag	56. . . . Crist waes on rode. Hwaeðere þaer fuse feorran cwoman To þam aeðelinge : ic þaet eall beheold. Sare ic waes mid *sorgum* gedrefed, hnag ic hwaeðre þam secgu*m* to hande.
miþ strelum giwundaed alegdun hiae hinae limwaerignae gistoddun him *aet* h*is* *li*caes *h*eaf*du*m *bi*hea*l*ddu*n* hi*ae* per h*eafun*	62. Eall ic waes mid straelum forwundod. Aledon hie ðaer limwerigne, gestodon him aet his lices heafdu*m*; beheoldon hie þaer heofenes dryhten. . . .

the seventh, eighth, or the beginning of the ninth century; and as to the Runes—there were runes carved on stones after the Norman Conquest. Neither the stone nor its writing then says anything certain concerning the age of the inscription. Kemble and Dietrich, on the other hand, reject altogether the view that the runic verses are by Caedmon. Kemble translated them. The inscription, he says, is in the usual Anglo-Saxon runes, and in the dialect which was spoken in Northumbria in the eighth and ninth centuries; and he finds their original in several passages in the *Dream of the Holy Rood*, passages which I have placed opposite to their runic resemblances on p. 144. That *Dream* has been allotted to Cynewulf by Dietrich and many others; and it is argued then that the lines on the Cross are Cynewulf's, and that the Cross is not earlier than the end of the eighth century. But it is a further question whether Cynewulf wrote the *Dream of the Rood*, and if he did not, we cannot for certain say that the Runes on the Ruthwell Cross are so late as the end of the eighth century. The matter then is open to debate; and if, as I think, the *Dream of the Rood* contains an old poem worked up by Cynewulf, and if the lines on the Ruthwell Cross belong to this old poem, it is just possible that the lines were written by Caedmon himself, or by some one of his school. Whoever wrote this poem, it became famous, and certain passages in it were used for inscriptions on crosses and relics. It is not only on the Ruthwell Cross that we find lines quoted from it. It seems to have supplied some words, or at least some suggestion for an inscription which has been found on a reliquary of the true cross in the treasure chamber of St. Gudule at Brussels, the latest history and criticism of which have

been written by Dr. Logeman of Utrecht University.[1] This inscription exists on a thin plate of silver which ran round the reliquary; and here is Logeman's arrangement of it. It is not in runes but in Roman letters, and is probably of the tenth century. "*Rod is min nama geo ic ricne cyning baer*,[2] *byfigynde blode bestemed*.[3] *Thas rode het Æthlmaer wyrican* ⁊ *Adhelwold hys berotho; Criste to lofe, for Ælfrices saule hyra berothor*."—"Rood is my name; long ago I bore a goodly king; trembling, dripping with blood. Æthlmaer bade work this rood, and Adhelwold his brother. To the glory of Christ, for the soul of Ælfric their brother!" On the back of the Cross the artist has placed his name—"*Drahmal me worhte*" (Drahmal wrought me). The phrases "*blode bestemed*" and "*ricne cyning*" are from the *Dream*; and the trembling of the rood, and the personal cry of it, are suggested also by the same poem.

I am glad to close this chapter with the verses that Baeda recited on his death-bed, and perhaps in no better place—since I wish to bind up the great scholar with the poetry of England—can I more fitly insert part of that pure and touching story, which, like a solemn evening landscape seen from the hill-top of a long life of faithful work, breathes so quietly the gentle and clear air of death.[4]

"To Cuthwin, my fellow-reader, beloved in Christ, Cuthbert his schoolfellow — Health for ever in the Lord! I have received with much pleasure the small

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[1] "L'Inscription Anglo-Saxonne du Reliquaire de la Vraie Croix" au Trésor de l'Église des S.S. Michel-et-Gudule, à Bruxelles. — 1891, Londres, Luzac et Cie., 46 Great Russell Street.

[2] "Rod waes ic araered : ahof ic ricne cyning."—*Dream of Rood*, l. 44.

[3] "Eall ic waes mid blode bestemed."—*Dream of Rood*, l. 48.

[4] The following account of Baeda's death occurs in a letter written by one of his pupils to another.

gift you sent to me, and with equal pleasure read your letters . . . in which I found that you carefully celebrate masses and holy prayers for our father and master Baeda, whom God loved. . . . He was much troubled with shortness of breath, yet without pain, before the day of our Lord's resurrection, that is about a fortnight; and after that, he led his life in cheerfulness and joy, giving thanks every night and day—nay, every hour—to Almighty God, till the day of our Lord's ascension, that is the seventh of the calends of June (26th May), and daily read lessons to us, his disciples. As to the rest of the day, he spent it in singing psalms; but in the night he lay awake, full of praise and delight, save when a short sleep fell on him, but no sooner did he awake than he began at once his wonted exercises, and, with uplifted hands, ceased not to give thanks to God. In sooth, I declare that I have never seen with my eyes, or heard with my ears, any man so earnest in giving thanks to the living God. O truly happy man! He chanted the text of the blessed Apostle St. Paul—'It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,'—and much more from holy writ; and also in our tongue—that is in the English tongue, as he was learned in our songs—he said some things. Moreover, he spoke this saying, making it in English—

> For þam neodfere nenig wyrðeð
> Þances snottra þonne him þearf sy
> To gehiggene aer his heonen-gange
> Hwet his gaste godes oððe yveles
> Aefter deaðe heonen demed wurðe

which means, 'No man is wiser than he need be, before this necessary departure, that is, to think, before the soul go hence, what good or evil it hath done, and how it is to be judged after its departure.'"

So far writes Cuthbert, Baeda's pupil, on this part of his master's dying hours. I give an accurate translation of the Anglo-Saxon, and place below, in a note, the old Northumbrian of the little song.[1] It will be found in Sweet's *Oldest English Texts*—

> Before the need-faring no one becomes
> Wiser in thought than behoves him to be,
> To the out-thinking, ere his hencegoing,
> What to his ghost, of good or of evil,
> After his death, shall be doomed (in the end).

[1] Fore there neidfaerae naenig uuiurthit
thoncsnottura than him thar[f] sie,
to ymbhycggannae, aer his hiniong[a]e,
huaet his gastae godaes aeththa yflaes,
aefter ðeothðaege doemid uueorth [a]e.
MS., *St. Gall*, 254.

CHAPTER XXI

NORTHUMBRIAN LITERATURE OTHER THAN ENGLISH

From 670 *to the death of Baeda*—735

The death of Oswiu and the accession of Ecgfrith in 670 are probably coincident with the first verses by which Caedmon began the religious poetry of England and founded the school of whose writings I have now given an account. About the same date, or a little before it, the Latin learning and literature of Northumbria began, and it flourished till the coming of the Danes. The history of this is, as far as the death of Baeda, the subject of this chapter.

English poetry has two distinct periods, the first of which belongs to the time of the glory of Northumbria, and the second to the time of its anarchy and decay. The first is bound up with the school of Caedmon, and may be said to close with the death of Baeda. The second, hereafter to be treated, may be collected round the name of Cynewulf. One is unconscious of sorrow and regret; the other is deeply conscious of both. There was then a division of sentiment, answering partly to a change in the fortunes of the kingdom, which breaks into two branchés English Verse in Northumbria. There is no such break in the

history of Latin literature in the North. It was only slowly affected by the internal troubles of the kingdom. Pursued in its monastic centres, apart from the strife of kings and pretenders, by men whom all sides honoured, concentrated finally in the ecclesiastical and political capital of the North where it was safest from disturbance and most easily patronised, it lived through all the anarchy, and may even have continued a miserable existence after the Danes had taken and settled in York. York was its last refuge.

It may be said to have begun in the reign of Ecgfrith, when Wilfrid obtained possession of the See of York, when he built new churches at Ripon and Hexham and founded their libraries, and when Benedict Biscop set up his monastery of Wearmouth in 674. Benedict, however, far more than Wilfrid, was the real founder of the Latin school; the true source of all that Northumbrian learning which, passing through Baeda and the scholars of York, restored to life, by English voices, the letters and sciences of Europe. He had brought to Northumbria the knowledge and arts he had acquired at Rome, and the methods of teaching he had practised with Theodore at Canterbury. In a few years, as we have already seen, he had collected two brother libraries at Wearmouth and Jarrow, founded one great school in these monasteries, and started science and literature on the path over which his scholar Baeda led them to a greater glory. In a long life he was never inactive in the cause of learning and beauty. Architecture, painting, music, glassmaking, embroidery were part of his religion. When ill and sleepless, he lessened the weariness of the night and soothed his pain by the reading of the Scriptures, and chiefly

of the patience of Job. He was half palsied, and no wonder, for he had made five times that terrible journey to Rome, the woes of which seemed, however, as nothing to the eagerness of this great collector. No man did more for the materials of Northumbrian learning, and it is not uninteresting to contrast this impassioned traveller with his scholar Baeda, who never left, save for a visit or two to York, the shelter of his monastery. When Benedict Biscop died in 690, Aldfrith was reigning, and this king's West Saxon and Irish learning gave a fresh impulse to Northumbrian culture.[1] He had a ready inspirer and helper in Abbot Ceolfrid, Biscop's successor at Wearmouth and Jarrow. The school of Ceolfrid became famous. The Pope asked his advice on ecclesiastical questions. Naiton, King of the Picts, desired a letter from him concerning the Roman tonsure and time of celebrating Easter, and this tractate, which Baeda gives in full, places him with justice among clear and vigorous writers. Baeda himself wrote his life, and a delightful piece of literature it is. There is no better picture of the daily life of an English monastery.

Both he and King Aldfrith are further connected by their literary relation to the book in which Adamnan of Iona gave an account of Arculf's journey to the Holy Land, the first of those books which in this country awakened the desire of pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Arculf, shipwrecked on the west coast, found his way to Iona, and dictated to Adamnan his voyage and adventures. Adamnan, who had been the tutor of

[1] Aldfrith, we are told by Baeda in the *Life of Cuthbert*, "in insulis Scotorum ob studium literarum exulabat"—"in regionibus Scotorum lectioni operam dabat"—"ipse ob amorem sapientiae spontaneum passus exilium." Malmesbury (26) gives the same testimony, and Eddius calls him *rex sapientissimus*. Wilfrid trained him also, and he was a fellow-pupil of Ealdhelm.

Aldfrith, brought him the book, sure of his interest and patronage. The King received it eagerly, sent it on to Ceolfrid, had many copies made of it, and dispersed them about Northumbria. The book is still preserved, and became popular in Europe through Baeda's abridgment of it, and through the extracts he made from it in the *Ecclesiastical History*. Ceolfrid also saw Adamnan and received him at Wearmouth on his second visit to Northumbria. It may be that Adamnan mingled with the discussion which then converted him to the observance of the Roman Easter some account of the *Life of St. Columba* which he compiled at Iona in the last decade of the seventh century. Baeda, however, does not seem to have been acquainted with this important book.

Some time later, after 709, Wilfrid's biography was written by his well-tried friend and companion, Eddius Stephanus. This book, composed in an excellent style, is of the greatest help to the history of the Northumbrian Church in the seventh century. It is worthy also of other remembrance, because it is the first biography written in England[1]—the first of a class of literature in which, though rarely, we have excelled. Another name of this time, linked to Hild, whose scholar he was; to Wilfrid, for he became Bishop of Hexham and of York; to Theodore, under whom he studied; and to Baeda, whom he ordained; is John of Beverley, whom we remember best from the fair minster which in after ages bore his name. He loved magnificence when he played the great bishop's part, but he loved solitude even more. The man of the

[1] Another biography, and written about the same time, is the *Life of St. Cuthbert* by a nameless writer, which was done and kept at Lindisfarne, and which Baeda used.

world was frequently merged in the anchorite. He had a solitary oratory on the top of the Earn's-Howe, a hill on the Tyne, to which he often retired from Hexham. It is curious to meet this reversion to the Celtic feeling of his youth, and we owe to it the founding of Beverley. In a region, as desolate then as it is now thickly populated, John chose in the midst of the woods and waters of Underwood a solitary meadow with a tiny church, round which the river Hull, delaying its speed, had been dammed by the beavers who afterwards gave the spot its name. Here, as he had done at Hexham and York, he kept up a school of learning, to which a host of persons, both lay and clerical, resorted.[1] One other name is sufficiently bound up with literature to be mentioned here—Acca, Wilfrid's closest friend, the most devoted supporter of his plans. Wilfrid nominated him to be Abbot of Hexham just before his death. In the same year, 709, he became bishop, and he ruled the See for twenty-three years. He was as fond of architecture as of music. He finished the three churches near Hexham which Wilfrid had begun. Baeda praises his skill in ecclesiastical music. He was another of the great collectors of books; the library at Hexham was famous. If he did not write himself, he caused others to write. It was he who urged Eddius to compose the *Life of Wilfrid.* He pressed Baeda to begin a commentary on St. Luke; and Baeda addressed to him his commentary on St. Mark, a poem on the Last Day, and perhaps the Hexameron.

These are the chief names among a number of

[1] Baeda's tale of one of John's miracles gives us a vivid picture of a part of the life of these schools attached to a monastery.—Book v. c. vi.

persons who spread Latin learning and literature at this early time over Northumbria. That learning, however, if it were to attain consistence and directive power, needed to be gathered together and generalised by a man of some genius. In Baeda of Jarrow the man was found. He made in himself a reservoir into which all the isolated streams of learning flowed. He added to them waters of his own which he had drawn from all the then known sources of learning in the past, and he distributed in channels hewn by himself all that he had collected, not only over England but, after his death, over Europe. And this was done just in time. The knowledge Baeda left behind him was concentrated in the mind of Alcuin, and reached the court and kingdom of Charles the Great exactly at the right moment—when Charles was extending his power far and wide, when he desired to unite his various tribes and peoples by an intellectual as well as a spiritual force. It was a great work, but the means whereby it was done had been stored up in the studious years which Baeda had filled at Jarrow with unremitting work.

The chief information which we have of his life is given by himself at the end of the *Ecclesiastical History*. "Baeda, a servant of God and priest of the monastery of the blessed apostles, Peter and Paul, which is at Wearmouth and Jarrow, who, being born in the lands of the same monastery, was, at seven years old, handed over to be educated by the most reverend Abbat Benedict, and afterwards by Ceolfrid;[1] and,

[1] I quote here the admirable summary of the means of education which fell to the lot of Baeda in Bishop Stubbs' article in the *Dict. Eccles. Biography*: "Under the liberal and enlightened administration of Benedict Biscop and Ceolfrith, Bede enjoyed advantages which could not perhaps have been found anywhere else in Europe at that time; perfect access to all the existing sources

passing all the rest of my life in that monastery, wholly gave myself to the study of Scripture, and to the observance of the regular discipline and of daily chanting in the church, and had always great delight in learning and teaching and writing.[1] When I was nineteen years old, I received deacon's orders, and when I was thirty those of the priesthood, and both were conferred on me by Bishop John and by order of Abbat Ceolfrid. From which time till I was fifty-nine years of age, I made it my business, for the use of me and mine, to gather together out of the writings of the venerable Fathers, and to interpret, according to their sense, these following pieces:"[2]—and here follows a list

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of learning in the West. Nowhere else could he acquire at once the Irish, the Roman, the Gallican, and the Canterbury learning; the accumulated stores of books which Benedict had bought at Rome and Vienne; or the disciplinary instruction drawn from the monasteries of the Continent as well as from the Irish missionaries. Amongst his friends and instructors were Trumbert, the disciple of St. Chad, and Sigfrid, the fellow-pupil of St. Cuthbert under Boisil and Eata; from these he drew the Irish knowledge of Scripture and discipline. Acca, Bishop of Hexham and pupil of St. Wilfrid, furnished him with the special lore of the Roman school, martyrological and other; his monastic learning, strictly Benedictine, came through Benedict Biscop, through Lerins and the many continental monasteries his master had visited; and from Canterbury, with which he was in friendly correspondence, he probably obtained instruction in Greek, in the study of the Scriptures, and other more refined learning. His own monastery was a place of rest and welcome for all learned strangers, such as Abbot Adamnan." I must mention a second time, in this connection, the literary friends whom he quotes as his authorities at the beginning of the *Ecclesiastical History*. Albinus, Hadrian's pupil; Nothhelm, who worked for him at Rome; Daniel of Winchester, and Forthhere of Malmesbury, who brought to him, I suppose, the works of Ealdhelm, which had their own influence on Northumbrian literature; Esi from East Anglia; Cynibert from Lindsey; the monks of many monasteries, and chiefly those of Lastingham who gave him the traditions of Cedda and Ceadda—poured each their knowledge into Baeda's ear. Kings gave him their friendship—Aldfrith and Ceolwulf to whom he dedicates his history. He had friends and correspondents in various parts of Europe, and a host of visitors going and coming for many years filled the cell at Jarrow with the experience of many men and many lands.

[1] It is said that he declined to be made Abbot of Wearmouth on the ground that the care of a great house distracted the mind from the pursuits of learning.

[2] The list of works seems to be "with some important exceptions, in the reverse order of their composition." The first written are probably the *Ars Metrica*, the *De Natura rerum*, and the *De Temporibus*, and their proper date is from 700-703. These were followed by the *De Sex ætatibus saeculi*—an admirable primer of the history of the world—written to be read to Wilfrid

of his works, at the end of which is this gracious sentence, "And now, good Jesus, I pray that to whom thou hast granted of thy grace to sweetly partake of the words of thy wisdom and knowledge, thou wilt also vouchsafe that he may at some time or another come to thee, Fount of all wisdom, to stand before thy face for ever, who livest and reignest world without end. Amen."

These are the last words of the book. "Here ends," he says, "by God's help, the fifth book of the Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation." It is his greatest work, the book in which he showed that he was more than an industrious compiler; one who had gained that power of choice, of arrangement, of rejection of materials which is necessary to win before building any work of literature into a form which will justly teach and please mankind. This shaping power he had won when he wrote the *Ecclesiastical History*, and

about the year 707. The *Commentaries* on almost all the Books of the Old and New Testaments are after 709; for they are dedicated to Acca, Bishop of Hexham, who succeeded Wilfrid in that year. They range over many years. The *Lives of Cuthbert* and of the *Abbats of Wearmouth and Jarrow* were probably written between 716 and 720. The *De Temporum ratione* is dated 726. The *Ecclesiastical History* was finished in the year 731. After this, shortly before his death, is the *Epistola ad Egbertum*; and on the day of his death he was still employed on his translation into English of the Gospel according to St. John.

Many other things, including Homilies, he wrote, but these are the chief. Most of them are studious epitomes, of great learning, of little originality. The scientific works are mostly derived from Pliny the elder; the grammatical and rhetorical writings prove his large acquaintance with the classic writers then known. He possessed as a scholar Greek and Latin, and he knew "as much Hebrew as he could learn from the writings of Jerome." The Commentaries are a mixture of a calm, clear, sensible, and unaffected teaching of Christian conduct and love with an extravagance of allegorical interpretation. Allegory was then, as it has often been, at times when piety has limited the love of beauty, the safety-valve of the imagination. But the chief burden of the teaching of the Commentaries is morality and love. They preserve that steady piety which has made the practical religion of the English people—"seeking," as Baeda said Cuthbert and Boisil did while they read together the Gospel of St. John, "that simple faith which works by love, nor troubling themselves with minute and subtle questions." Of all these works none can be said to belong properly to literature except the *Lives* of Cuthbert and the Abbats, the *Ecclesiastical History*, the *Letter to Ecgberht*, and perhaps the *Hymns*.

with it he possessed also, by virtue of his happy nature, that other power of ornamenting his literary building with clear and fair description of his characters, and with softly-carved and delicate tales. In a slighter way this is also shown in his life of Cuthbert, and, in a graver fashion and on a graver subject, in his letter to Ecgberht, the form of which is admirable.

Along with this much of the "shaping power of imagination," he had a careful love of truth and of testing his materials. He may fairly be called the father of modern history, our first critical historian. He spent a world of time, and employed a host of assistants, in collecting contemporary information. He rarely sets down anything without giving his authorities for it, or without stating that it is without authority. The elaborate account of all the sources of his history to which I have already drawn attention does not stand alone as an example of his conscious pride in his own accuracy. The pains he took to verify his facts is the chief subject of his preface to his prose life of St. Cuthbert. "I have not dared," he says, "to transcribe what I have written without the most careful examination of credible witnesses. Moreover, I inserted the names of my authorities to establish the truth of my narrative. I kept back my book from public reading till I had submitted it to Herefrith and others who had long known the life of this man of God." He then tells how he sent it to Eadfrith of Lindisfarne—that is, to Cuthbert's own monastery. For two days the elders then read and examined it, and pronounced it worthy to be copied. It may be that Eadfrith's criticisms bored him. "Eadfrith," he says, "added many other facts concerning Cuthbert in conversation, but I have not inserted them; the book, after due

consideration, I considered to be fully finished." After this *naïve* remark he is equally pleasant about his life of Cuthbert in Latin Hexameters, which Lindisfarne had evidently not as yet cared to possess. The book is dull, but Baeda was pleased with it. "If you wish," he says, "to have these verses, you can get a copy of them from me."

The whole of this belongs to the literary side of his character. He is not critical, it may be said, concerning the miracles he inserts. But in his time miracles were believed to be part of the order of Nature, and they replaced in daily life the legendary stories of the heathen heroes. Indeed, the chief literary value of the *Ecclesiastical History* is to be found in its stories of miraculous events and in its sketches of character. The form of these is excellent, their style of a charming simplicity, their tenderness poetic. The character of Baeda is revealed in the conduct of these tales. The more we read the greater the affection which we feel for him; and the awakening of such an affection is one of the most delicate proofs which a book can give of its being fine literature. Baeda excelled in stories, not by his learning or by his intellectual training, but by the child in him: by the admiration, humility, unconsciousness, trust, and love which led him gladly to believe and delightedly to record his wonders. Moreover, these same qualities enabled him to see with clearness what was best in the men of whom he wrote, and to express it with so much joy and tenderness, so lucidly and so sweetly, that the characters in the *History* stand forth like pictures done by a painter like Fra Angelico. The images of Eadwine and Coifi, of Oswald and Aidan, of Cuthbert and Ceadda, of Hild and Caedmon

—and I choose only a few,—make us see and love our forefathers. He has the same power elsewhere. The Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow, of whom he speaks in his little book upon them, appear as alive before us and win our reverence. The entrance of Eosterwine into the monastic life, the death of Benedict, the departure of Ceolfrid for Rome like Paul from the sea-shore, could not be better done. But the best of these lives is that of Cuthbert of Lindisfarne. Baeda loved his subject, and his love of the man pervades the book with charm,—a charm derived from two delightful but different characters—the character of Baeda the writer and the character of Cuthbert the subject of the book.

This biography is made up of many tales, and most of them are of miracles. It is strange that after such repeated care and the reading of the life by so many persons, no doubt whatever is thrown on any of the miracles told of a man who had died so short a time before. One of them is so curious that Baeda thinks it may be questioned. The passage is marked by his happy simplicity, and yet by a sudden stirring in him of his desire of truth. It illustrates, then, on two sides, his literary character. Cuthbert, troubled by a swelling in his knee, is prescribed for by a man on horseback clothed in white robes and of an honourable aspect. He follows the prescription and gets well. "At once," says Baeda, "he perceived that it was an angel." Then he considers the matter and adds, "If any one think it incredible that an angel should appear on horseback, let him read in the history of the Maccabees," and he alludes to the story of Heliodorus which Raffaelle has so nobly painted. It is also worth saying, for it still further illustrates his literary

character, especially as an historian, that, when he is speaking in his own person, he has no knowledge of the miraculous. When he has told the tale of Cuthbert quenching in one day a supernatural as well as a natural fire, he adds, "But I, and those who are like me conscious of our own weakness, can do nothing in that way against material fire." Again, when he speaks of the beasts and birds obeying Cuthbert—"We, for the most part," he says, "have lost our dominion over the creation, for we neglect to obey the Lord." The same careful note steals sometimes into the *Ecclesiastical History*. It represents the struggle, it may be an altogether unconscious struggle, of the temper of the scholar who demands accuracy with the temper of the pious monk to whom the miraculous was so dear and so useful.

No man, judging from his writings, was less self-conscious, and it is partly owing to this that his tales of others are so vivid. There is scarcely a single personal allusion in his writings, nor does he fill up his stories with remarks of his own. It seems a pity that we know so little of him; but then, had he been personal, he had not been so delightful a story-teller,[1] nor would he have done so well his special work of collecting into one body the knowledge of his time.

That no imaginative work full of his personality

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[1] One personal touch belongs to the artistic side of the man, and it is of the more interest when we think of the boy who sang in the choirs at Wearmouth and Jarrow, of the man who admired the poetry of Caedmon, who sang psalms and antiphons with mingled joy and sorrow on his death-bed, who made and chanted English hymns. He is speaking of music, and he cannot keep back his pleasure in it:

"Among all the sciences, this is more commendable, courtly, pleasing, mirthful, and lovely. It makes a man liberal, courteous, glad, amiable; it exhorts him to bear fatigue; it comforts him under labour; it refreshes the troubled mind; it takes away headaches and sorrow; and dispels the depraved humours and the desponding spirit."—Bed. *Op.* vol. viii. p. 417. (S. Turner's translation.)

exists, sets him apart from the men who feel the poetic impulse, and his long home-staying agrees with this judgment. No inner driving sent him on pilgrimage; his was a scallop-shell of quiet. But though he sat at home, he knew the world. The news of travel and knowledge in England and Europe were brought to the cell of Baeda, and all the corn he received he made into bread which men could eat and digest with ease. We can well imagine with what charm he welcomed his guests and how many were the friends he made. One man, however, as age grew on him, seems to have been nearest to him. This was Ecgberht of York, whom Baeda must have chosen to carry on his work of learning, of teaching and writing. Almost the only visit he paid in his long life was to Ecgberht, when for a few days they sat together and talked over education, literature, and the state of the Church in Northumbria. The year after he sent to Ecgberht the last of his extant writings, the well-known *Epistola ad Egbertum*. "The soundness and far-sightedness of the ecclesiastical views in this work would be remarkable in any age, and are especially remarkable in a monk. The lessons contained in the letter might serve, in the neglect or observance of them, as a key for the whole history of the Anglo-Saxon Church."[1] Independent of this usefulness is the literary quality of the letter. It is in excellent form; it slides, with easy and natural connection, from subject to subject; it is as clear as a bell; its firmness and authority are as distinguished as its gentleness and courtesy. What he says of the fitting language to be used by a bishop may well be said of the style

[1] These are the words of Bishop Stubbs. Bede, *Dict. Eccles. Biog.*

of his letter—"His speech should always be seasoned with the salt of wisdom, elevated above the common diction, and more worthy of the Divine ear." Few pastoral letters, and it may well bear that name, have been more weighty with wisdom, piety, and grace; and the words are worthy of the emotions and thoughts with which they are charged. Its love of the souls of men, its love of the work of Christ, are both suffused with a solemn and admonitory love of his country. Sadness and hope, when the old man looks forth from his quiet place over the past and future of Northumbria, commingle in his language, and the sense of his approaching departure gives the letter all the dignity of the last words of a servant of the Lord. For now his time was at hand, and his scholars clustered more closely round him. While he could still move, he never missed his daily service in the church. "I know," he said, with his childlike grace, and it is Alcuin who records the phrase, "that the angels visit the canonical hours and the gatherings of the brethren; what if they do not find me among the brethren? Will they not say, Where is Baeda; why does he not come with the brethren to the prescribed prayers?" At last, as the days grew on to the time of the Lord's Ascension, his sickness grew upon him; and Cuthbert, his scholar, has recorded in a letter, some of which I have already quoted, and which, from its observant and affectionate grace, is a part of English literature, the happy hours of the dying of his father and master whom God loved. He sang the antiphons, but when he came to the word, *Do not forsake us*, he burst into tears and they all mourned with him. But he had also much joy, and he filled even these days with work. "I have not lived

so as to be ashamed," he said, "among you; nor do I fear to die, because we have a gracious God,"—words which St. Ambrose also used. He laboured to compose two works. The first of these was Collections out of the notes of Bishop Isidorus, and of this he said—his love of truthful work still strong in death—"I will not have my pupils read a falsehood, nor work therein without profit after my death." The second was a translation of the Gospel of St. John as far as the words, "But what are these among so many?"—and the history of English literature speaks of it with pleasure and regret; with pleasure, for it is the first translation into our own tongue of any book of the Bible; with regret, for the translation has not come down to us.

On the Tuesday before the Ascension he suffered still more, but dictated cheerfully, saying among other things, "Go on swiftly; I know not how long I can continue. My Maker may soon take me away." The night was passed in thanksgiving, and on Wednesday he bid them write with speed what he had begun. "Most dear Master," said one, "there is still one chapter wanting, does it trouble you to be asked more questions?"—"It is no trouble," he answered. "Take your pen, make ready and write fast." Which he did, but at the ninth hour he said to me, "I have some little things of value in my chest, such as pepper, napkins, and incense; run quickly and bring the priests of our monastery that I may distribute among them the gifts which God has given me." Then he passed the day "joyfully till the evening, and the boy who wrote for him said, 'Dear Master, there is yet one sentence unwritten.' He answered, 'Write quickly.' Soon after the boy said, 'The sentence is now written.' And he

replied, 'It is well; you have said the truth. It is ended. Take my head into your hands, for I am well satisfied to sit facing my holy place, where I was wont to pray.' And thus on the pavement of his little cell, singing, 'Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost,'—when he had named the Holy Ghost, he breathed his last, and so departed to the kingdom of Heaven." So passed away, as quietly as he had lived, the "Light of the Church," the "Father of English learning."[1]

While he was yet alive, a new school of poetry, other than the Caedmonic school which he had celebrated, had begun; and soon grew steadily. It lasted fully fifty years after his death; until that fatal time when Jarrow and Wearmouth where he had worked, and Lindisfarne which he had loved, were harried by the heathen men. It is this new school and its labours which now call us back from the prose writers to the poets, from the literature in England of a foreign tongue to a literature in our own language.

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[1] They wrote an epitaph for him—

> Presbyter hic Baeda requiescit carne sepultus;
> Dona, Christe, animam in caelis gaudere per aevum;
> Daque illi sophiae debriari fonte, cui jam
> Suspiravit ovans, intento semper amore.

I have placed these bad verses here that I may quote the indignant criticism which William of Malmesbury, with all the humorous haughtiness of a scholar, makes upon them. Moreover, his criticism shows how rapidly scholarship, beyond York, decayed in Northumbria. "They are contemptible," he says, and adds, when he has quoted them, "Is it possible to thin down by any excuse the disgrace, that there was not to be found, even in that monastery, where during his lifetime the school of all learning had flourished, a single person who could write his epitaph, save in this mean and paltry style? But enough of this; I will return to my subject."—*Chron.*, Bk. i. 3.

CHAPTER XXII

"THE DISCOURSE OF THE SOUL TO THE BODY" AND "THE ELEGIAC POEMS"

THE characteristic of the Caedmon cycle of poems is the absence of self-consciousness; the personality of the poet does not appear in *Genesis*, *Exodus*, or *Daniel*, in the *Christ and Satan*, or in *Judith*. It is true that in *Genesis B* a good deal of subtle drawing of character exists—as subtle, that is, as the age permitted,—but this part of the poem is said to be much later than the death of Baeda. Yet, even here, the writer is not concerned with himself, his own sorrows, or his salvation.

It is quite different with a class of poems which began to rise about, I think, the beginning of the eighth century. These poems are concerned with personal fates, and with the emotions these fates awaken; with the personal relation of the soul to God and its eternal state; and many of them are written with the eye of the writer fixed on his own heart and its imaginations. Baeda's death-lay is a short piece which represents a whole class of poetical prayers wrung forth by the passion of the soul for redemption; and this class of poem now continued to be composed by the English. Every one of them worth calling poetry is steeped in personal

feeling. This subjective drift of poetry is especially marked in Cynewulf. All the poems which he has signed with his name, however far the story he tells in them be impersonal, contain, either in their midst or at the end, a short or long passage which is entirely taken up with his own feelings. Even the *Riddles* may begin and close with a personal representation; and the things concerning which he riddles are personified with a force which proves how deeply he was penetrated with this individual manner of thinking and feeling.

The poems discussed in this chapter are, I think, earlier than Cynewulf's work, somewhat earlier even than the *Riddles*. Four of them belong to the earthly fates of men, and one to their spiritual fate. This one poem is called the *Discourse of the Soul to its Body*. The other four are the Elegies, and I think I may claim that term for them; at least in its earlier sense among the Greeks. Three of them are *laments*, and one is a longing cry of love.

The *Discourse of the Soul to its Body* exists in full as a double poem. The first is the speech of a lost soul to its corpse; the second of a saved soul to its body. The first is found in the Exeter and also in the Vercelli book; the second—a fragment without an end—is only in the Vercelli book, and the first is as good as the second is poor work. So distinct is their power, though their motives are similar, that I am inclined to guess that the second was written some time after the first, in order to complete the representation of the subject, and by another poet; and if this be the case, it might explain why the second poem does not appear in the Exeter book. Moreover, the second poem stands alone.

The first was frequently imitated, the second never. "No poem of a similar kind," says Hammerich, "in which a pious soul speaks with its body is found in any other literature." We may conjecture then, since the one was imitated and the other not, that the first poem originally stood alone, and the second was afterwards added, perhaps by Cynewulf himself. It is not worth while perhaps to make this suggestion, but unless it is made, I cannot express my opinion that the first verses may be as early as the beginning of the eighth century. I give this date with diffidence, because I am conscious of expressions and of a certain manner in various parts of the poem which seem to belong to a later time, and so much so, that even if the suggestion be not true, I must still hold that the poem was edited with additions at a later period. Nevertheless, the lines I subjoin seem to mark the year in which it was written—

> Then shall come the spirit, crying out with sorrows!
> After seven nights shall the soul draw near to find
> Always its own body (once long time it bore it—)
> For three hundred winters; if the King of nations,
> If Almighty God earlier will not work
> Of this world the end. l. 9.

The spirit, when seven nights have passed, will, every night for 300 years, visit the corpse it once inhabited. Why 300 years? The answer is, I conjecture, that it was the general expectation at this time that the end of the world would come in the year 1000. If the poet was thinking of this, the date of the poem would be about the year 700; and that he *was* thinking of this appears more probable from his phrase, "unless it be the will of Almighty God to bring the world to an end sooner than in 300 years." Some literary questions concerning Anglo-Saxon

poetry would be made clearer if this meaning of the verses should prove to be justifiable.

"Cold is the voice of the Spirit and grimly it calls to the corpse, 'O gory dust! why didst thou vex me? O foulness, all rotted by the earth; O likeness of the clay! God sent me into thee, I could not leave thee; thy sinful lusts pressed me down, it seemed to me 30,000 winters till thy death-day! Thou wert rich in food, sated with wine; I was thirsty for God's body, for the drink of the Spirit. Shame shalt thou bear in the great Day. Thou art dearer now to none than the swart raven. Thou hast no goods, only thy naked bones; thy joys are nothing, but by night I must seek thee again and again, and at cock-crowing go away. Better, on the day thou shalt give account, hadst thou been born a bird, a fish, the fiercest of serpents than a man. Wroth will the Lord be at that Doom-tide. And what shall we two do?'"

This is the abstract of the speech, and it has its own special quality. Then the poet describes the spirit's departure, and the silence of the body. It cannot speak; it is altogether riven asunder and plundered by the worms. One of them leads the way into the body for the rest, and this is the sole piece of creative imagination in the poem—

119. *Gifer* is he hight, (grim that Worm is,)
Sharper than the needle are the jaws of him.
First of all—he drives into the Earth-grave,
Tears the tongue asunder: through the teeth he pierces;
From above, into the head, eats he through the eyes;
Works for other worms way unto their food,
To their wealthy banquet!

This King, this Captain of the Worms, *Gifer*, venomous Greed, piercing his way for the rest through the head into the corpse, is worthy of Ezekiel.

There are four Elegies full of interest in Anglo-Saxon poetry; these are the *Wanderer*, the *Seafarer*, the *Wife's Complaint*, and the *Husband's Message*. To these we may add the *Ruin*, though it is not sufficiently personal in its passion to come easily within the proper circle of the Elegy. I have already translated the *Ruin*. Its motive — the sorrow for departed splendour and happiness awakened by the sight of a town long since desolate, with its fortress and market-hall crumbling in the midst of it; the recalling of the joyous life that once was there, and the imaging, through its death, of the passing away of all the world —is a common motive. The *Rhyming Poem* seems to take it up. It is reproduced in some of Cynewulf's longer poems. It appears in the midst of one of these four Elegies, in the *Wanderer*; and the passage is so like certain lines in the *Ruin* that it almost seems to be suggested, if not copied, from the *Ruin*, or the passage in the *Ruin* from it.

This was a motive which lay continually before the eyes of men in Wessex, Mercia, and Northumbria during the long series of petty wars of the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries. The subject alone cannot then date these elegiac poems. But when we consider the elements in them which distinguish them from other Anglo-Saxon poems of the eighth century, and at the same time keep our eye fixed on the history of that century in Northumbria, I think we may make a probable conjecture as to their date.

The internal evidence of the *Wanderer*, the *Wife's Complaint*, and the *Husband's Message* points to their having been written in a time of disturbance, when not only the halls of nobles were desolated, but when exile was common. The wife talks of her husband

driven from his folk and refuging in a far-off land. The message of the husband comes from a foreign country to England. She is to join him in his exile where he has made a home. The wanderer has fled from England, and sees the vision of his ruined happiness and of his slaughtered friends. This state of things would suit with the condition of England after the coming of the Northmen. But there is no allusion to the Danes in the poems, and there was no literature in Northumbria in the ninth century. It would also suit with the time of anarchy in Northumbria after the resignation of Eadberht in 758, to which period we may refer the passages in Cynewulf's poems which sorrowfully remember happier days. But I do not feel as if these elegies belonged to the latter part of the eighth century, and my reason is first, that they have a certain pagan element which has wholly disappeared from the poems which belong to the Cynewulf cycle; and secondly, that the sorrow expressed is not a retrospective sorrow, like Cynewulf's, for the decay of the whole land, but a personal and present pain. We might fairly find such a time in that parenthesis of bad government and of national tumult which filled the years between the death of Aldfrith in 705 and the renewed peace of Northumbria under Ceolwulf in the years that followed 729.

The pagan quality, or rather the absence of any Christian element in these poems, is remarkable. There is not a trace of Christianity, save perhaps a certain overfineness of sentiment, in the *Wife's Complaint* or the *Husband's Message*. In the *Seafarer* the first part of the poem is without a single Christian touch. The second part is a Christian allegory of the

first. Many think, however, that the poem is one, that the writer had the second part in his mind when he wrote the first. The matter cannot be determined; but my impression is that they are distinct, and that either some later writer added the allegory to the first part, or that the poet himself, later in his life, distressed to find his early work so much without religion, continued it into a Christian allegory. As to the *Wanderer*, it opens with a Christian prologue and closes with a Christian epilogue, but the whole body of the poem was written, it seems to me, by a person who thought more of the goddess Wyrd than of God, whose life and way of thinking were uninfluenced by any distinctive Christian doctrine.

Now I conjecture that in the first twenty or thirty years of the eighth century there were poets living in the courts of the princes and earls of Northumbria—such, for example, as we know Cynewulf was in his youth—who were Bohemian enough, if I may be permitted that term, not to care for anything but poetry; to whom Christianity was a good thing, but over whom it had no special hold; who were half pagan at heart while Christian in name; and who resembled, but only in the general temper of their minds, the class of literary men whom the Renaissance made in Florence and Rome. It was this class who wrote, I think, these elegies, and it is probable that there were a great many more poems of this kind. Later on, they were taken up by bards who were connected with the monasteries, and we may almost lay our hands on the work of these men in the prologue and epilogue of the *Wanderer*. But even this Christianising of older work was not done by men who lived late in the eighth century. At that time, when Cynewulf, for example,

wrote the *Christ*, these additions would have been, at least in my opinion, more specialised in their doctrine. To this early time belong also, as I think, a number of the riddles attributed to Cynewulf. The riddles on the Bow and Sword and Spear, on the Hurricane, the Swan and others, are quite apart from Christian sentiment. They are the work of a man who, a Christian no doubt in name, cared only for his art.

Another thing worthy of remark about the elegies is their intensity with regard to the aspects of Nature. I hesitate to call it a love of Nature, because I do not think it was a conscious pleasure, such as we possess. But, as I have said elsewhere, the descriptions of nature show so close an observation both of what is beautiful and what sublime, that there must have been pleasure to account for the observation, and where there is pleasure there is love. The *Seafarer* could scarcely describe better the savage doings of the German Ocean or the soft incoming of the spring; the *Wanderer* paints the tumbling waves and the sea-birds dipping and preening their feathers, and the wintry storms darkening the sky and binding the earth; the *Wife's Complaint* dwells like a Highland ballad on the wild-wood dwelling under the roots of the great oak among the briars; the *Husband's Message* sings of the advent of the summer, and the cuckoo crying from the woods that fledge the mountain-steep. There is nothing like this in Icelandic poetry—nothing of the same contemplative quality. And what is still more remarkable and modern, is that the natural objects are not always seen as they are, but as they seem to the mood of the poet. They are touched with his joy or gloomed with his misfortune. The pleasant cry of the cuckoo is a voice of sorrow to the longing

lover. The careering waves and the sea-birds' play are mournful to the exile who sits alone and grieving on the cliffs. Even the modern passion of being alone with Nature is not unrepresented. The young man in the *Seafarer* longs to be away from the joys and noise of men upon the far paths of the solitary sea. There is nothing so modern in sentiment, nay in very expression, in the whole of English literature till we come to Tennyson, as the first part of the *Seafarer*. The cry of Tennyson's *Ulysses* is in it, and the cry of his *Sailor Boy*. Were I to put it into blank verse, every one would say that I was imitating Tennyson. Even in lines of mere description, without the elegiac sentiment of humanity, this Tennysonian likeness appears. When the Seafarer says that he was in the Northern Sea

> Icicle-hung, while flew the hail in showers,

one would swear that the line was from the mint of Tennyson. Nor is the psychological passage in the *Seafarer* less modern in feeling. I remember nothing in the Icelandic poems which is similar to it; and I do not know where, in the history of English poetry, to find the poetic temper likely to produce it except in the later Elizabethans of the reign of James I., and in the last thirty years. The young seaman, eager for the ocean, sees his soul pass from his body, make the voyage he desires to make, and return to him, greedy with new passion for the deep. The *Wanderer* embodies his memories in the ghosts of his friends who float before him in the mist; he cries to them, mindful of old comradeship, but they are silent. They bring him none of the old familiar songs. They swim away in the mist, as in a sea, and his pain is deepened.

This is not so modern as the passage in the *Seafarer*, but it is quite at home in the nineteenth century. When we think that these poems were written fully 1100 years ago, this is very remarkable; and the recurrence, after all those centuries, of a special distinct note of sentiment, only shows how constant are the roots of English song, and how needful it is, if we would fully understand it, to go back to the ground in which it was planted. Seeing then that these elegies are important, and that, as short pieces of poetic art, they are the best things of this kind which we possess from ancient times, I discuss and translate them at large.

The *Husband's Message*, or, as I think it should be more justly called, the *Lover's Message*, consists of an introduction of eleven lines describing, in the manner of an Anglo-Saxon riddle, the slice of wood on which the message is carved in runes. The rest is the message itself; and the wood-tablet is the spokesman throughout—an awkward and fantastic experiment of the poet. It tells first of its origin among the Tree-kin, and then of how often, in the bosom of the ship, it was sent over the salt sea streams to those in high-built houses. This time it brings a message of love to the beloved, hoping to find her constant, imploring her to join its sender in his foreign home. Bethink thee, it says, of the troth thou didst pledge of old in the burgs where mead was drunk; a hatred drove thy lover forth from the folk of victory; now he calls thee to take rede how thou mayst sail the sea to him—

19. Soon as ever thou shalt listen on the edges of the cliff
To the cuckoo in the copse-wood, chanting of his sorrow,

. . . .

25. Then begin to seek the sea where the sea-mew is at home;
Sit thee in the sea-bark, so that to the south-ward
Thou mayst light upon thy lover, o'er the ocean path-ways,
Where thy Lord with longing looks and waits for thee.

Here, after this charming call, the manuscript is disturbed, but the meaning is that there can be in the whole world no joy so great as would be if they were together. Treasure of gold the Lover has won and a fair land, and many warriors serve him. He has overcome all trouble; but nothing is worth anything unless he have her with him. No desire has he

43. Nor for jewels, nor for horses, nor for joys beside the mead,
Nor for any of Earls' treasures, here the earth upon—
If, King's Daughter, he should lack thee,
After all the troth of yore pledged between the twain of you.

And the poem ends with the binding together of the runes of their names *S. R. EA. W.* and *M.*,[1] to symbolise the bond of love he will keep faithfully till death. The motive is clear and simple, and the strain of feeling passionate and innocent. It has neither the strength nor the intensity of Icelandic work on a similar subject, but it has its own distinct note of tender sentiment.

The *Wife's Complaint* is a much more involved piece—its subject obscure, its motives varied, and its thought finely woven. Its fault as a poem is over-subtlety, but it is better written than the last, and more interesting. We might almost say, if we could think that both these poems were written by the same person, that he perhaps unconsciously contrasted the simplicity of a man's affection with the tangled variety of a woman's love, his one thought with her multi-

[1] The runes that stand for *D* and *M* are so like one another that it is doubtful which letter is here. Wülker prefers *M*.

tudinousness. It was Ettmüller who first said it was the plaint of a woman, and some have asked whether it stood alone, or was part of a larger poem, in which also the *Husband's Message* was contained. Both, it has been thought, might belong to the poems of the Genovefa-Saga, in which Genovefa, "abandoned by her husband, pours forth her sorrow in the solitude of the Ardennes' wood." But Ten Brink thinks it is a single poem which tells its own subject, and Wülker, agreeing with him, says that if it belong to any Saga, it would be to the Offa Saga, which at least was known in England.

The foes of the woman, the relatives of the husband, have made bad blood between him and her, accusing her either of falseness or magic. Exile was the punishment for both these crimes, and the husband banishes her to a wood, to an allotted place within boundaries which she must not overstep. Many women, it is probable, were living in this fashion in England during the eighth century, and this one begins—

1. Of myself with sadness laden do I sing this song,
Tell the tale of mine own fate! Truly can I say
What of sorrows I have suffered since I was upwaxen,
Whether new or old, but never worse than now.
6. First, my Lord, he fared from his folk away,
O'er the surging of the sea! Morning-sorrow then was mine!
Where, O where within the land was my Master now?
Then to fare me I was faring, following of him to seek,
Friendless and a flying exile!

Then her husband's kinsmen began with crafty thought to plan how they might set them apart, so that they should "live the loathliest of lives, but she endured the longing of desire." And her lord bade her take a dwelling in the wood. There were few who loved her, few were her friends, and all the worse was her cruel fate. He whom she loved most, who loved her

most, had most mistaken her, and had hidden his heart from her. "My heart for this is grieved the most"—and Desdemona herself might have used the words—

18. That I found a man wholly fitted for me;
Yet of soul unhappy, sorrow-struck in spirit,
From me hiding all his heart; holding murder in his thoughts,
Yet so blithe of bearing. O full oft with vows we bound us
That save Death alone nothing should divide us,
Nothing in the world— but now—all changed is that!
Now is it, alas, as if had never been
Friendship erst between us. Far away or near,
I must bear the hatred of my best-beloved.
27. In a grove amid this wood they have garred me dwell,
Underneath a holm-oak tree, in this hollow of the earth!
Old is this earth-house; I am all one long desire!
Dim these caverned dells, steep the downs above,
Bitter my burgh-hedges, with wild-briars overgrown.
Dreary is my dwelling! Here my Lord's departure
Oft has wrought me wretchedly.
Lovers in the world there are,
Who in loving live together, lie together on their bed,
While I, in the early dawning, all alone am going
Underneath this oak-tree, in and out of these earth-hollows,
Where I needs must sit alone all the summer-lengthened day,
Where I, weeping, shall bewail for my woful banishment
My uncounted sorrows.

And this part of the elegy ends with an accent of despair, "Never, never shall I rest from misery and longing." Then, if Grein's conjecture be right, and it is quite plausible, she turns to curse the author of her exile in the following lines. But it may as well, and even better, be said by her of her husband. In that case the lines below are not imprecation but a mournful statement of what he is sure to suffer. Care will be his and woe and outlawry—

42. Sorrowful of soul shall the young man ever be;
Hard to bear his heart-thought, howsoe'er he have
Outwardly blithe bearing— and therewith breast-care,
Ever-during sorrow's driving? Doomed to him let be,
All world-woefulness; and full wide be he outlawed
In a far-land of the folk.

Then with a rapid change she thinks of her husband as exiled from her. She is not angry with him—and the whole of this passage is subtly thought—but full of tender womanliness, full of pity that he is deprived of her. She knows he loves her still, pictures his lonely life thinking of his home that once was so happy. She creates around him scenery in harmony with her heart and his. Confident of her own fidelity she lets herself love him; but he who thinks her guilty, and yet loves her, O what sorrow must be his? Worse, worse than mine! Wretched am I,

47. For my friend is sitting
Under the o'erhanging cliff, over-frosted by the storm;
O my Wooer, so outwearied, by the water overflowen,
In that dreary dwelling! There endures my dear one
Anguish mickle of the mind, far too oft remembers him
Of a happier home! O, to him is woe
Who shall with a weary longing wait for the Beloved!

From this remarkable poem, so modern in feeling, we pass to a poem still more modern, more distinctly English, mingling in it our sea-longing and our sense of the dangers of the sea. This is the *Seafarer*. It has, like the *Wanderer*, some obscure passages to which many meanings have been allotted. These render translation difficult, but the chief difficulty arises from the modern feeling of the poem. It is almost impossible not to slip into blank verse, and blank verse of the nineteenth century. To do that were to make it far more modern than it ought to be made. The early English note would be lost. Nevertheless, just to show how near the *Seafarer* and the *Wanderer* are to us, and how easily they wear our dress, I have put them both literally into blank verse in a note at the end of this volume.

I have already said that the latter part of the poem,

from verse 64, or as Rieger thinks from verse 72, is a later religious addition. That part I pass by. It resembles any of the homilies, and it has neither intelligence, passion, nor imagination. The first part has these elements, and has them remarkably. We may take it as a dramatic soliloquy, in which the poet contrasts two views of a seaman's life, and ends by saying that whether the life be hard or not, the attraction to it is irresistible; or with some German critics, with Rieger and Kluge, arrange it as a dialogue between an old seaman and a young man on whom the passion for the sea has come, in which the old man tells, in warning, of the dangers and woes of the deep, and the young man replies. It is a convenient form into which to put the poem, and I use it here, though we may just as well take it as a dramatic lyric[1]—

Seafarer

The Old Man—
Sooth the song that I of myself can sing,
Telling of my travels; how in troublous days,
Hours of hardship oft I've borne!
With a bitter breast-care I have been abiding:
Many seats of sorrow in my ship have known!
Frightful was the whirl of waves, when it was my part
Narrow watch at night to keep, on my Vessel's prow
When it rushed the rocks along.[2] By the rigid cold

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[1] Rieger divides it into six parts, and holds that the whole of the poem is composed by one man. The *Old Man* speaks, he says, the lines 1-33 (*corna caldast*); from 39-47 (*fundað*); from 53-57 (*lecgað*); and from 72 to end. The *Young Man* speaks from lines 33-38 (*gesece*); from 48-52 (*gewitan*); from 58-71 (*oðþringeð*). This division is partly adopted in the text, but I am not sure that Kluge's division is not better. It is certainly simpler. The *Old Man* speaks from 1-33, and the *Young Man* from 33-64 or 66. Kluge also believes that the original poem ends at verse 64 or 66; and that the rest is a later edition borrowed in parts from the homilies; but he seems to detect in it also several heterogeneous elements. Wülker thinks that the poem may be a dialogue as far as verse 64, and that this first part had originally nothing to do with Christianity.

[2] *Be clifum cnossade*, "when it dashed against the seas as it ran by the cliffs." This is, I think, the true meaning. It cannot mean "when it struck on the cliffs."

Fast my feet were pinched, fettered by the frost,
10. By the chains of cold. Care was sighing then
Hot my heart around ; hunger rent to shreds within
Courage in me, me sea-wearied ! This the man knows not,
He to whom it happens happiest on earth,
How I, carked with care, in the ice-cold sea,
Overwent the winter on my wander-ways,
All forlorn of happiness, all bereft of loving kinsmen,
Hung about with icicles ; flew the hail in showers.
Nothing heard I there save the howling of the sea,
And the ice-chilled billow, 'whiles the crying of the swan !
20. All the glee I got me was the gannet's scream,
And the swoughing of the seal, 'stead of mirth of men ;
'Stead of the mead drinking, moaning of the sea-mew.
There the storms smote on the crags, there the swallow of the sea
Answered to them, icy-plumed ; and that answer oft the earn —
Wet his wings were— barked aloud.
. . . . None of all my kinsmen
Could this sorrow-laden soul stir to any joy.
Little then does he believe who life's pleasure owns .
While he tarried in the towns, and but trifling balefulness,—
Proud and insolent with wine— how out-wearied I
30. Often must outstay on the ocean-path !
Sombre grew the shade of night, and it snowed from nor'rard,
Frost the field enchained, fell the hail on earth,
Coldest of all corns.

Young Man—
Wherefore now then crash together
Thoughts my soul within that I should myself adventure
The high streamings of the sea, and the sport of the salt waves !
For a passion of the mind every moment pricks me on
All my life to set a-faring ; so that far from hence,
I may seek the shore of the strange outlanders.

The *Old Man* now, if we adopt Rieger's division, which is certainly the most dramatic, is carried away by the passion of the young fellow, and remembers his own sea-longing and sea-loving. "Yes," he answers, "there is nothing like it"—

Old Man—
Yes, so haughty of his heart is no hero on the earth,
40. Nor so good in all his giving, nor so generous in youth,
Nor so daring in his deeds, nor so dear unto his lord,
That he has not always yearning unto his sea-faring,
To whatever work his Lord may have will to make for him.

For the harp he has no heart, nor for having of the rings,
Nor in woman is his weal, in the world he's no delight,
Nor in anything whatever save the tossing o'er the waves !
O for ever he has longing who is urged towards the sea.[1]

Young Man—
Trees rebloom with blossoms, burghs are fair again,
Winsome are the wide plains, and the world is gay—
50. All doth only challenge the impassioned heart
Of his courage to the voyage, whosoever thus bethinks him,
O'er the ocean billows, far away to go.

And now the ancient mariner takes up again the voice of warning, and with a touch of sorrowful irony brings in to help his prudence the bird of Spring of which the youth has spoken—

Old Man—
Every cuckoo calls a warning, with his chant of sorrow !
Sings the summer's watchman, sorrow is he boding,
Bitter in the bosom's hoard. This the brave man wots not of,
Not the warrior rich in welfare— what the wanderer endures,
Who his paths of banishment, widest places on the sea.

Then the youth breaks forth, his passion spurred by opposition, and paints, with a force and freedom of imagination which at this early time is astonishing, how his spirit has left his body—hovers for a moment over his heart, has flown away now over the sea, has made the voyage to the outlanders, and now returns, a lonely-flier, yelling like a cormorant, to join again his body and drive him forth to sea. The passion for the deep has seldom been better imaged. What is this to me, he cries, for that is the sense of the *Forþon* with which he begins—

For behold, my thought hovers now above my heart ;
O'er the surging flood of sea now my spirit flies,
60. O'er the homeland of the whale— hovers then afar

[1] This passage, and the previous one beginning, "That he has not always yearning," etc., may be otherwise explained. "Yearning to seafaring" may be simply yearning in seafaring for the land, and "longing for the sea" may be no more than "longing on the sea for shore." This would, no doubt, suit the old man's argument, but I believe that the meaning in the text is the right one.

O'er the foldings of the earth! Now again it flies to me
Full of yearning, greedy! Yells that lonely flier;
Whets upon the Whale-way irresistibly my heart,
O'er the storming of the seas!

The rest is a sad business; religion, as too often is the case, has slaughtered poetry. There is no such break of power in the *Wanderer* which is the last of these elegies in the Exeter Book. Some have thought that at verse 80 new matter has been linked on, but this is criticism searching for something to say. The poem moves easily from its beginning to its end, and of all Anglo-Saxon poems it is best in form. It has been allotted to Cynewulf, but there is no proof whatever that he wrote it; nay, the total absence of any Christian feeling in it would almost suggest that in its original form it may have been a purely pagan utterance, but this is a very problematical opinion. Yet some phrases in the prologue lead us to think that the poem was old, was found by some monk, admired and edited by him with a Christian introduction and end—

The Wanderer

PROLOGUE

Oft a lonely wanderer wins at last to pity,
Wins the grace of God, though, begloomed with care,
He must o'er the water-ways, for a weary time,
Push the ice-cold ocean, oaring with his hands,
Wade through ways of banishment! Wyrd is fully wrought.
Thus there quoth an Earth-stepper— of his troubles taking thought,
Of the fall of friendly kinsmen, of the fearful slaughters.

Oft I must alone, at each breaking of the day,
Here complain my care! Of the Quick there is not one
10. Unto whom I dare me now declare with openness
All my secret soul. Of a sooth, I know
That for any Earl excellent the habit is
That he closely bind all the casket of his life,
Hold his hoard-coffer secure— but think in heart his will!
Never will the weary spirit stand the Wyrd against,

Nor the heart of heaviness for its help provide ;
Therefore this unhappy heart oft do Honour-seekers
Closely bind and cover in the coffer of their breast.
So it happed that I— oft-unhappy me !
20. Far from friendly kinsman, forced away from home—
Had to seal securely all my secret soul,
After that my gold-friend, in the gone-by years,
Darkness of the earth bedecked ! Dreary-hearted, from that time,
Went I, winter-wretched, o'er the woven waves of sea,
Searching, sorrow-smitten, for some Treasure-spender's hall,
Where, or far or near, I might find a man,
Who, amidst the mead-halls, might acquainted be with love,
Or to me the friendless fain would comfort give,
Pleasure me with pleasures.
He who proves it, knows
30. What a cruel comrade careful sorrow is to him,
Who in life but little store of loved forestanders has !
His the track of exile is, not the twisted gold,
His the frozen bosom, not the earth's fertility !
He the Hall remembers then, heroes, and the treasure-taking,
How of yore his gold-friend, when he but a youngling was,
Customed him to festal days ! Fallen is all that joy !
O too well he wots of this, who must long forego
All the lore-redes of his Lord, of his loved, his trusted friend,
Then when sleep and sorrow, set together at one time,
40. Often lay their bondage on the lonely wretched man.
And it seemeth him, in spirit, that he seeth his man-lord,
Clippeth him and kisseth him, on his knee he layeth
Hands and head alike, as when he from hour to hour,
Erewhile, in the older days, did enjoy the Gift-stool.
Then the friendless man forthwith doth awaken,
And he sees before him only fallow waves,
And sea-birds a-bathing, broadening out their plumes ;
Falling sleet and snow sifted through with hail—
Then the wounds of heart all the heavier are,
50. Sorely aching for One's-own ! Ever new is pain.

For the memory of kinsmen o'er his mind is floating,
With glee-staves he greeteth them, gladly gazes on them—
These companionships of comrades swim away again !
Of the old familiar songs few the spirit brings
Of these floaters in the air.[1] Fresh again is care
For the exile who must urge, often, oh how often,
O'er the welding of the waters his outwearied heart !

[2] Wherefore I must wonder in this world of ours

[1] I take *fleotendra* to mean the hovering spirits of his comrades whom he sees in the air.

[2] Now the motive changes ; it is no longer his personal grief that disturbs him

Why my soul should not shroud itself in blackness,
60. When about the life of earls I am wholly wrapt in thought,
How they in one instant gave their household up,
Mighty mooded thanes ! So this middle-earth,
Day succeeding day, droops and falls away !

[1] Wherefore no one may be wise till he weareth through
Share of winters in the world-realm. Patient must the wise man be,
Neither too hot-hearted, nor too hasty-worded,
Nor too weak of mind a warrior, nor too wanting in good heed,
Nor o'erfearful, nor too glad, nor too greedy of possessions,
Never overfond of boasting till he throughly know himself.
70. Every son of man must wait ere he make a haughty vow [2]
Till, however courage-hearted, he may know with certainty
Whither wills to turn its way the thought within his heart.

A grave man should grasp this thought— how ghostlike it is
When the welfare of this world all a-wasted is—
Just as now, most manifold, o'er this middle-garth,
Walls of burgs are standing by the breezes over-blown,
Covered thick with chill frost, and the courts decayed.
Wears to dust the wine-hall, and its Wielder lies
Dispossessed of pleasure. All the peers are fallen,
80. Stately by the ramparts ! War hath ravished some away,
Led them on the forth-way; one the flying ship has borne
O'er high-heaving ocean— one the hoary wolf
Dragged to shreds when dead ! Drear his cheek with tears,
One an earl has hidden deep in earthen hollow.[3]

So the Maker of mankind hath this mid-earth desert made,
Till the ancient Ogres' work idle stood and void
Of its town-indwellers, stripped of all its joy.

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the most. It is the sorrow of the whole world ; how and with what temper it must be met ; and yet of what little use is any guard against the misery. Wyrd has its own way ; and the Winter Weather is its image.

[1] He turns to sketch the temper of mind which is best fitted to combat with this incessant Fate, and there is no better portrait of the steady mean of the best English nature. Settled, secure in courage between excess and defect, not moving till his plan is made, but ready then to face all consequence. This is not quite the *Happy Warrior* of Wordsworth, but it may well be compared with that image of a hero.

[2] This refers to the custom of standing at the great feast of the year and taking vow to perform some valiant deed before the year shall close. Many troubles came on men who, drunk or excited, swore that of which next day they repented ; and it is on such overweening vows that the story of some Sagas is built.

[3] These are the various kinds of death,—death on the war-path ; death on a sea-expedition, that is, death in a foreign land (*Fugel* is the war-ship) ; death, when outlawed, by the wolf; death in old age ; and the earl weeps when he buries his friend in the barrow because he has not died in battle,—one of the pagan touches in the poem.

Whoso then this Wall-stead[1] wisely has thought over,
And this darkened Life deeply has considered,
90. Sage of soul within, oft remembers far away
Slaughters cruel and uncounted, and cries out this Word,
"Whither went the horse, whither went the man? Whither went the Treasure-giver?
What befell the seats of feasting? Whither fled the joys in hall?
Ea, la! the beaker bright! Ea, la! the byrnied warriors!
Ea, la! the people's pride! O how perished is that Time!
Veiled beneath Night's helm it is, as if it ne'er had been!"

Left behind them, to this hour, by that host of heroes loved,
Stands the Wall, so wondrous high, with worm-images adorned!
Strength of ashen spears snatched away the earls,
100. Swords that for the slaughter hungered, and the Wyrd sublime!
See the storms are lashing on the stony ramparts;
Sweeping down, the snow-drift shuts up fast the earth—
Terror of the winter when it cometh wan!
Darkens then the dusk of Night, driving from the nor'rard
Heavy drift of hail for the harm of heroes.

All is full of trouble, all this realm of earth!
Doom of weirds is changing all the world below the skies;
Here our fee[2] is fleeting, here the friend is fleeting,
Fleeting here is man, fleeting is the kinsman!
110. All this earth's foundation is an idle thing become.[3]

Epilogue

So quoth the sage in his soul as he sat him apart at the runing.[4]
Brave is the hero who holdeth his troth: nor shall he too hastily ever
Give voice to the woe in his breast, before he can work out its cure,
A chieftain, with courage to act! O well 'tis for him who comfort doth seek
And grace from the Father in Heaven, where the Fastness stands sure for us all.

[1] A place where walls had been, a ruined burg. [2] Goods, property.

[3] This is the end, and the last line clinches the subject of the poem with a fine climax of passion. Then comes the Epilogue, the addition of the more Christian poet who found and edited the earlier work; he has nothing original to say. He only repeats, a mere editor, the motive of the lines 66 and 70. It is true we may grant him the contrast he makes between the Fastness in Heaven—the city which hath foundations—and the wasted and passing fortresses of earth described by the poet.

[4] That is, in secret counsel with himself; or is it possible that the original was really written in runes?

This is the last and finest of these elegies, pagan in feeling, and, it may be, built on some pagan original; but it is not more pagan than many of the *Riddles* of Cynewulf, half of which seem to me also to belong to this early part of the eighth century, and to have been written when the young poet was living at the court of some lively Ætheling, riding, warring, singing, making love,—one of those semi-heathen Bohemians with a Christian education of whom I have spoken.

The *Riddles* are contained in the Exeter Book, not together, but in three separate divisions. The manuscript appears to contain ninety-five of them, but, as generally reckoned, we have only eighty-nine, though there were probably a hundred. It was the custom of riddle-writers to make a century of them. Symphosius made a hundred, so did Ealdhelm. Tatwine, Archbishop of Canterbury, only composed forty, and Eusebius, of whose life we know nothing, completed the collection of Tatwine up to a hundred. Boniface and others wrote a few, but they are chiefly of a sacred character. These were all written in Latin verse, and vary from four to twenty lines. Ealdhelm, however, who treated his subjects with more fancy, wrote many of a much greater length. What sort of thing a riddle of this time meant is sufficiently plain from the examples already given.

The collection in the Exeter Book is, with the exception of one riddle, in English verse, and at least half of it is worthy of the name of literature. Symphosius, Tatwine, Eusebius, and Ealdhelm are used by the writer, and since he makes use of them all, he could not have written earlier than the eighth century. The Riddles are of various lengths, from four to over a hundred lines. The greater number of them escape

from the Latin convention, and are as English in matter and feeling as they are in verse. Even when they closely follow for a line or two the Latin original, the translation takes an English turn, as if the English verse and words compelled a change of thought and sentiment. Nor is this the only difference. The writer has the poetic faculty of which his models are destitute, and his work is as superior to theirs in conception of each subject, in impersonation of it, and in imagination, as Shakspere's *Hamlet* is to its precursor. Those who state that these riddles are merely imitations can either not have read them, or, having read them, are unable to distinguish between what is poetry and what is not poetry. Their excellence is not however uniform. Some are poor and meagre, and these are chiefly those which follow the Latin most closely. Others are of an extraordinary fine quality, as, for example, those on the storms and the weapons of war. It is more than probable then that various writers shared in their composition; but it is also plain that there was one man of youthful and vigorous imagination, and of an original personality, who, having a poet's love of humanity and of nature, made a great number of them.

Who this man was is still a subject of discussion. Leo, in 1857, declared that the solution of the first riddle was the name of Cynewulf. As he had written his name in runes in other poems, so here, at the head of the *Riddles*, he expressed it enigmatically, following the sound and not the spelling of his name. Dietrich disagreed with this explanation, but nevertheless maintained the authorship of Cynewulf. The eighty-sixth Riddle, which concerns a wolf and sheep, was related, he said, to Cynewulf; and the eighty-

ninth, which he explained as the Wandering Singer was Cynewulf himself. This evidence of authorship, resting on a riddle of great obscurity and on questionable assumptions, is of extreme tenuity, and Trautman and others have bluntly thrown it aside. Professor Morley also is satisfied that the answer to the first Riddle is the "Christian Preacher," that the eighty-sixth means the "overcoming of the Devil by the Lamb of God," and that the eighty-ninth means the "Word of God." These answers, in which we are rather overwhelmed with Christianity, make an end, he suggests, of all the supposed evidence that Cynewulf was the writer of the Riddles. Each critic argues himself into faith in his own rightness, but the fact is that no conclusion is possible at present. I believe myself that Cynewulf was the writer of the greater number of the Riddles, and that they were written at different periods of his life, but the grounds for this belief are vague. It is clear, I think, that their writer was a wandering singer at one time of his life, that he had fought as a warrior, that he had sailed the seas, that he knew well a rocky and storm-lashed coast, that he had seen many phases of religious, social, and domestic life, that he had lived with the rich and the poor, with the ecclesiastic and the war captain. Any poet might have had all these experiences as well as Cynewulf. But we know of Cynewulf, and we know that he did once belong to a noble's court, and that his youth was healthy and gay; that he was a singer of songs, and that the probability is that he wandered as a poet from court to court, from village to village, from monastery to monastery. It is also plain, from passages in *Guthlac* and in the *Elene* and the *Christ*, that Cynewulf knew the seas and

knew about war. It is not absurd then, even if we give up the first and last Riddles as evidence for Cynewulf's authorship, to think that the Riddles belong to him. Moreover, there are certain parallel passages between some of them and the authentic works of Cynewulf which, not only in wording, of which I think little, but in sentiment, of which I think much, might lead one to infer that they were written by Cynewulf. These grounds are, however, only literary, and literary persons alone are likely to receive them as amounting to probability. Nor am I at all anxious to prove the point. What is important is not who wrote the poetry, but of what kind the poetry is. I hope I have made it pretty clear in previous chapters, not by criticism, but by examples, that the writer, whoever he was, had not only talent, but some genius; nor do I hesitate to say that some of the most imaginative Anglo-Saxon poetry we possess is contained in about a dozen of the Riddles. I do not think I need dwell here on their range of natural description, or on any of their special characteristics. Those who have read what I have given of them in the chapters on the "Settlement," and the "Sea," can indulge in and supply their own criticisms. The Riddles given in those chapters are, however, on noble subjects, belonging to Nature and War and Wisdom; things fitted for the hearing of the gray-haired prince, the warrior, and the monk. There are a number of others, of which I have not written, which were made for the villagers and the ruder sort; to fit the other end of society. The common animals of the hamlets—the ox, the dog, the hens, the swine; the common things in use—the cowhide, the leathern bottle, the wine-vat, the onion, the one-eyed garlic

seller, and the fools who are led astray by the night—are celebrated by this manifold writer who had seen the world. It only remains to say that there are a few of such primæval grossness that they indicate a young man's hand, and a coarse audience in village or camp. It seemed to me once, that if he was afterwards, as some think, the Bishop of Lindisfarne or even a monk—I do not believe he was either—he would not have allowed them to exist. But it is probable that he could not have repressed them. They were afloat, and were no doubt repeated from mouth to mouth. They may not have been collected until after the writer's death. Moreover, English folk, even the monks, were never very prudish, and became less and less so as monasticism grew corrupt in Northumbria. Even Leofric, who, I suppose, read the Exeter Book through before he gave it to his Cathedral Library, did not erase these riddles.

CHAPTER XXIII

CYNEWULF

We know the names of only two writers of Anglo-Saxon poetry, and these two are Caedmon and Cynewulf. We know that Caedmon was a Northumbrian of Whitby, but we do not know whether he wrote any of the poems which bear his name. It is different when we think of Cynewulf. Many believe him to have been a Northumbrian, but we do not know this with any certainty. But we do know some of the poems he wrote; he has signed four of them with his name—*Juliana*, the *Christ*, the *Fates of the Apostles*, and the *Elene*. There is a fifth writing—the *Riddles*—which most persons think he has also signed with his name. In the four first he signs in this fashion. He puts the runes which spell his name into certain connected and personal verses in the midst, or at the end, of each of these poems; and Kemble was the first to discover that these runes, when placed together, made up the poet's name. Owing to this discovery it occurred, as we have seen, to Leo that the first Riddle contained in a charade the syllables of Cynewulf's name, and that in this way the *Riddles* were also signed.

Attached to the four signatures, if I may call them so, there are four personal statements in which some-

thing of his character and part of his life are vividly portrayed. Moreover, the last Riddle which I have translated in the first chapter is, if we allot it to him, as vivid a description of himself as a young poet, as the personal descriptions in the signed poems are of himself as a religious man in old and middle age. We possess then not only his name, but we can also realise him as a man; and he is not unlike some of our own poets, though so many centuries have passed away. He is, for instance, as personal as Cowper, and in much the same way. No other of the Anglo-Saxon poets has this fashion of talking about himself, and it is so unique, and the manner of it so distinct, that when I find it in a poem which is not signed by him —in the *Dream of the Rood*—it seems to me to be as good as his signature.

The question as to whether he was a Northumbrian or not has been elaborately argued to and fro, and Wülker, with all these warring arguments before him, concludes that the matter remains doubtful until further evidence, for or against, is supplied.[1] I have, however, a few suggestions to make in confirmation of my belief that he was a Northumbrian, or at least lived in the North; and I am not aware (though it is probable enough) that they have been made before. The first is, that if Cynewulf wrote the *Riddles*—and far the greater number of critics think he did—he was well acquainted with a storm-lashed coast bordered with cliffs; with the life and business of sailors in their ships, and that the seas which he knew were not only tempestuous but frequently weltering with ice. It seems incredible that the writer of the riddles on the

[1] A full discussion of the whole question will be found in Wülker's *Grundriss*, pp. 157-164.

Anchor and the Tempests, to say nothing of others, could have lived inland in Mercia, or on the low-lying coasts of East Anglia, or on the southern coasts of Wessex where ice was never seen in the sea,[1] and where seamanship in the eighth century was at a very low ebb. The *Christ* is also full of sea allusions ; the cliff-barrier between sea and land is once, at least, vigorously seen ; and the famous passage, translated at vol. i. p. 256, is written by one who had been a sailor, who knew the pains and longing of a seaman's life, and who spoke to men who, being themselves seamen, would understand him. It is not a passage which a poet, writing in Mercia or Wessex, was likely to have written. Again, if we allot the last part of the *Guthlac* to Cynewulf, and we may do so with the greatest probability, the supposition that he was a Northumbrian of the sea-coast is strengthened. The voyage over the fens is turned into a sea-voyage. It is as if the poet knew

[1] This welter of sea and ice which, frequently spoken of in *Beowulf*, is there no doubt a remembrance of the Baltic frosts, is also spoken of in the *Seafarer* and the *Riddles*, and other poems which belong, as I think, to Northumbria. It would not be seen, I have said, on the Anglian or Wessex coasts, but it is seen to this day on the Northumberland coasts, especially where the great sand-flats extend far out to sea, and are covered daily by the tide. In the course of a severe three days' frost, the sand-flats become one vast ice-field, many hundreds of acres in extent and five or six inches in thickness. The tide daily breaks this up and carries the broken masses about ; fresh ice forms on the vacant parts, and this is again broken up, till, as the storm comes in, the welter of ice and water is amazing. "Where, as happens in such extremity of cold as we experienced" (and I quote from Abel Chapman's *Bird Life of the Borders*, p. 165) "in the winter of 1878-79, and again in January 1881, the frost continues unbroken for weeks at a time, the phenomena created by the ice and tide are almost incredible save to those who have witnessed them. The masses of detached ice, split up by their own weight into fragments of all sizes and shapes and carried here and there by the currents, drive helter-skelter in the tideway, and along the lee shores are thrown up into ridges and rugged piles, extending for miles along the shore. Outside this glacial barrier of stranded blocks, the floating floes, carried along by the strong tide currents, grind and crash against each other, piling up table on table till they become miniature icebergs, and form a spectacle such as few have seen outside the Arctic regions." If this took place in Northumberland in 1881, what must it have been in the eighth century, when the winters, owing to the vast extent of the forest land, were much colder than now, and the snowfall much heavier. The Northumbrian poets saw this continually, and described it, but the Wessex and Mercian folk did not see it at all.

nothing of the reed-fens, but described what he did know—a passage by sea from one point of the coast to another. If, again, we allow that one of his school or he himself wrote the *Andreas*, the Northumbrian origin of Cynewulf is so far strengthened.

The scenery of that poem closely resembles the coast-scenery of the North. The writer was evidently a sailor; there is even, as I hold, a personal statement of this in the poem.[1] No inland man, no Mercian, is likely to have written that voyage. Moreover, I do not know of any place on the coast of Wessex where a sea-poet was likely to write. Many such places did exist on the coast of Northumbria — Whitby, Hartlepool, Jarrow, Tynemouth, Lindisfarne, Coldingham,—all centres of learning, and all in constant sea-communication. Many stories in Baeda make us aware that sailing, and in rough seas, went on continually along that coast. The atmosphere of the *Christ* and the *Elene*, and of the end of *Guthlac*, to say nothing of the *Andreas*, is as Northern as that of the sea-pieces in the *Riddles*. An "atmosphere" is perhaps poor evidence, but it is of value when it goes with other probabilities. Moreover, it is not such weak evidence as it seems. One might say, for example, that Tennyson could never have lived on the Northern coast. His atmosphere is of the gentler lands and coasts below the Humber; and I can no more conceive the *Elene* and the *Riddles*, *Guthlac* and the *Andreas*, being written on the Southern coast or inland, than I can conceive *Maud* being written at Bamborough or Whitby.

The second suggestion is that we have no proof that any school of native poetry existed either in

[1] Lines, 498-499.

Mercia or Wessex, while we have plain proof that a good school did exist in Northumbria. The simplest probability then is that poems of so high a class as the *Christ*, the *Elene*, and some of the *Riddles*, arose in a country where native poetry had been practised and nurtured for fully a century.

Thirdly, I may make another suggestion as to the Northumbrian origin of these poems of Cynewulf, by comparing the personal sentiment of them with the historical conditions of Northumbria. All the personal portions are marked by regret and melancholy, not only for himself and his sins, but for the state of the world in which he lived. He speaks in the *Christ* of how a man should nourish his soul, "while this world, speeding through its shadows, still shines for him, so that he lose not, in this fading tide, the blossoms of joy." The time is barren in which he lives. Life is "a dangerous stream of immeasurable waves, and these are stormy oceans on which to and fro we toss, here in this weak world, over the deep sea-paths."[1] These might be only personal phrases referring to his spiritual state; but they take a more national significance when we read, in the *Elene* and the *Fates of the Apostles*, how wealth is fleeting under heaven; how all the treasures of earth glide away like water, or pass like the wind which rushes through the sky and then is shut in silence and in prison. Even more remarkable are the expressions in the introduction to *Guthlac*. "The glory of all the fruit of earth is smitten with eld; all the kinds of growth change away from loveliness; the latter tide of every seed is now weaker of virtue; therefore no man may

[1] Lines, 1584-1586, 850-856.

dare to hope—face to face with this world's change—that the world will bring him any fair delight."[1] This note of retrospective melancholy, which is the undertone of all these poems, does not suit the life men lived in Mercia when Æthelbald and Offa, with only a short break of disaster between them, lifted Mercia into prosperity and fame, from 716 to 796 ; nor does it suit the national life of Wessex after the battle of Burford (754). Wessex was then looking forward, in fine fighting condition, active and young. Its position would kindle a poet into hope rather than inspire him with a melancholy regret. But Northumbria was exactly in the state which would be likely to produce the half-sad, half-despairing note of Cynewulf, who finds all his joy, not on the earth, but in the world to come.

This argument depends on the supposition that Cynewulf's signed work was written in the latter half of the eighth century. This is, however, generally confessed. We cannot place the *Christ* and the *Elene* until twenty or thirty years after the death of Baeda. We should have to place them even later if we thought that Cynewulf was born about the date of Baeda's death, as some persons have thought. I conjecture that he was born twenty years or so before Baeda's death, that he wrote the *Riddles* somewhere about 730 when he may have been twenty-five years old, and that the date of the *Christ* and the *Elene* varies from 750 to 780, when he may have been from forty-five to seventy years of age. As to the forward limit of their date, we need not discuss whether they belong to a time after the reign of Ælfred. Few persons, I imagine, hold that view. The question is, when did Cynewulf cease

[1] No doubt such phrases belong to all sermonising. But they do not occur in the Caedmonian poems ; and, moreover, Cynewulf was, I believe, a layman.

to write? and I think he had done so before the first Viking incursions on the coast of Northumbria. There is not a single allusion to these terrible strangers, and, given a writer so personal as Cynewulf, so sensitive to the sorrows of the world, it is very strange, if he were then writing, that not a trace should be found in his work of events like the storming of Lindisfarne and Jarrow, which terrified all Northumbria and brought horror to the heart of Alcuin far off upon the continent. The argument is stronger if we think that the *Dream of the Rood* is Cynewulf's last poem. It is extremely personal at the close, but not a word is there of the dreadful blow which fell with so dire a threat in it on Northumbria in 793. I hold then that Cynewulf had ceased to write before that year.

These are the suggestions that I make concerning Cynewulf's date and his dwelling-place. It is easy to throw doubt on his Northumbrian origin, but is very difficult to prove that he was not a Northumbrian. The probabilities point the other way. As to the statement that his poems, being in the West Saxon dialect, are most probably West Saxon,—it proves too much. It would prove that all Anglo-Saxon poems are also West Saxon, for they are all in that dialect; and the further statement that there is nothing in his language to testify to a Northumbrian origin is not true, and if it were, might only prove that the West Saxon translator was an intelligent and clever fellow.

The next matter is his life and his character. What do we know about them? The character of a poet may be partly inferred from his style, from his mode of seeing and thinking of the things concerning which he writes, from the changes in his writings as he grows older. But very little weight

belongs to such inferences unless we have some known foundation to build upon. We do possess this in the case of Cynewulf. We have four distinct revelations of his feelings and thoughts in poems signed by himself. Inferences then which do not quarrel with these known things are, in this case, of some value, and the fact is that Cynewulf stands before us with some clearness.

We know less of his life than of his character. The allusions which concern his life are vague, and the temptation to take other poems, like the *Wanderer*, to call them Cynewulf's, to add their personal detail to his life, and to build up, in theory, a complete biography, is very great. A series of guesses, made by allotting to Cynewulf any poem in which a few lines occurred to fit their theory, enabled some critics to build up Cynewulf's life from his cradle to his grave. This is an agreeable exercise, but it is not history. What we do know I shall now put down in Cynewulf's own words, quoting the passages of which I have spoken. They will tell us something of his character and something of his life; and whatever inferences or additions to these I shall make shall be recorded as inferences alone.

We have to begin with something of an assumption. I assume that he wrote the *Riddles*. The proof that he wrote them, which is derived from the supposed enigma on his name in the first Riddle and from the explanation of the last Riddle as the "Wandering Singer," is, as I said, not clear. But, for other reasons as well as this, the critics in Germany and England have, with few exceptions, accepted him as their writer. If then they are his work, they tell us what he was as a young man. It is plain he was a lover of

nature and of animals; that nothing human was alien to him, and to such a degree that the human impersonation of inanimate objects, which the form of the Riddle demanded, was especially easy to him and delightful. He was a close observer and accurate recorder of all he saw and heard; imaginative also, and rejoicing in his imagination; a natural poet to whom everything he saw was a subject; moving (and here I must repeat a little) at ease among rich and poor; as ready to verse a rude, even a coarse song, for the peasant or the soldier as a lay of battle or of ancient wisdom for the Ætheling, the abbot, or the king; loving praise in the hall, and fond of gifts; loving solitude also when the fit came on, and hiding himself from men; having a clear consciousness of his worth as a poet; gay, ready for sports, riding with the troops of young men; indifferent to religion, but not irreverent; not much troubled with morality, and so little that he looked back afterwards on his life as weighted with sins; sensitive, and one who felt friendship keenly,—such is the picture we should be likely to make of the man who wrote the *Riddles*, and much of it is borne out by the signed statements of the *Christ* and the *Elene*. When he recalls his youth in the *Elene*, he speaks of the treasures, the appled gold, which once were given him in the mead-hall, of his horse proud of its equipments on which he measured the miles of the road, of his joy and pride of yore, of his youth and its gaiety.

The time came when this careless happiness passed away "like the hasting waves," he says, "like the storm which ends in silence." Some overthrow happened, such as might easily occur in the tempestuous anarchy of Northumbria; and many, taking the

Wanderer to be written by him, say that the description of the exile's fate in it is Cynewulf's description of what happened now. Such a fate may indeed have been his, but we do not know. What we do know is that we find him next in the bitterest sorrow, convinced, as men say, of sin; fear of the wrath of God lying heavy upon him, and so bitterly smitten by remorse that his song-craft left him; he was no more a poet. Then he had a revelation of the redeeming power of the Cross of Christ. Hope entered his soul, and I believe, but cannot say for certain (this is one of the inferences), that the *Dream of the Holy Rood* is his poetic account, written in old age, of this moment of conversion. At any rate, and here we return to the certain, the craft of song returned to him with the beginnings of hope. God Himself, he says, unlocked the power of poetry in his breast; and the first thing that he wrote was the *Juliana*.[1] In that he is still despondent; little spring or life balances the remorse which weighs upon him, and he implores all those who read his book to pray for him. Here is the passage, and we see the man. The runes, which I print in Roman letters, and which have only here the value of letters, spell the name Cynewulf.[2]

[1] I feel inclined to think that the first part of *Guthlac* (A) preceded the *Juliana*.

[2] The Runes used are, ᚳ : ᚣ : ᚾ : ᛖ : ᚹ : ᚢ : ᛚ : ᚠ :. C. Y. N. E. W. U. L. F. Two only of the four passages which contain these runes include the E. rune, the ᛖ. These are in the *Juliana* and the *Elene*. It is not found in the passages in the *Christ* and in the *Fates of the Apostles*. Cynewulf then spelt his name in two ways, with and without the E.

These runes have in the *Juliana* only the value of the letters of his name. They do no more than spell *Cynewulf*. But in the three other poems, they stand not only for the letters of his name, but have also the meaning of the runes themselves, that is, of the words by which the runes are named. These meanings are to be read into the verses. When, for example, we read ᛚ *toglideð—L. ebbs away*, we translate the rune ᛚ into the name by which it is called, into *Lagu*, *water*, and read, *water ebbs away*, and we do the same thing for all the other runes.

"Great need have I," he says, "that this Holy One (Juliana) should make help for me, when the two married ones, the soul and body, the dearest of all, break up their kinship, and my soul go out of my body

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Each of these three passages is then a kind of riddling charade on his name, and a runic puzzle. The meanings, or rather the words which name the runes in all these three sets of verses, are as follows:—

C. stands for *Cene, the keen, the courageful warrior.*

Y. stands for *Yfel*, which means "as a masculine adjective, *wretched*; or as an abstract noun, *misery*."

N. stands for *Nyd, necessity, hardship.*

E. stands for *Eh, horse.*

W. stands for *Wyn, joy.*

U. stands for *Ur, our.*

L. stands for *Lagu, water.*

F. stands for *Feoh, wealth.*

These meanings fit all the three passages; that is, they are easily connected with their context in all the passages. The same rune has the same meaning throughout.

This unity of interpretation has been brought about by Mr. Gollancz. It did not, in the case of four of the runes, exist until his edition of the *Christ.*

C. was taken to mean sometimes *Cene, keen*, and sometimes *Cen, a torch*, the name of the C. rune in the runic alphabets. Y. was taken to mean *Yr.* the Norse name for the Bow, by which name it is called in the *Rune-poem* which was written in England after the Danish invasions, but, as this gave impossible meanings to the text, it was said to signify *Yrmðo, misery.* W. was sometimes taken to mean *Wyn, joy*, and sometimes *Wen, hope.* U. was the great difficulty. Its name in the *Rune Song* is *Ur, a bull*, and some scholars thought that Cynewulf took it in that sense. Others said that *Ur* meant *property* in general (oxen being one of the chief sources of wealth). Others took it as the adverb *Ur, formerly*; but this adverb does not occur in Anglo-Saxon. These are the divers meanings given to these four runes. It was important to get the same meaning in all the three passages to each rune. That was not impossible with C. and W. But it was thought to be impossible with regard to Y. and U. till the appearance of Mr. Gollancz's edition of the *Christ*, to which he added an *Excursus on the Cynewulf Runes.* His explanation of the Rune Y. as *yfel*, and of the Rune U. as equivalent to *Ur, our, noster* (he discovered *Ur* glossed as *noster* in a Runic alphabet), has, I think, settled the question. These explanations fit in with the context in all the three passages.

When I originally wrote this chapter, this note did not exist, and all the new information contained in it is taken from this *Excursus* in Mr. Gollancz's book, an early copy of which he was kind enough to send to me. I had also, following the greater number of critics, translated the Y. and the U. runes by *Yrmðo* and by *Ur* in the sense of *formerly*, and the C. rune in the passage in the *Elene* by *Cen, a torch.* I was now compelled, while the book was going through the press, to rewrite this chapter and the translations, so far as they were affected by the new meanings given by Mr. Gollancz to these runes. However, when it was done with the help of his discovery, I felt all the satisfaction a person feels who, long tossed on an uncertain sea, finds himself at last on firm land. Those who wish to pursue the subject further, and to see it thoroughly penetrated, will do well to obtain *Cynewulf's Christ, edited by Israel Gollancz and published by David Nutt, in the Strand, London.*

on voyage to the unknown land, to seek another shore, for sins done long ago"—

> 703. Sorrowful is wandering
> *C*; and *Y* and *N*! He, the King, is wrathful,
> God, of conquests Giver! Then, beflecked with sins,
> *E* and *V* and *U* must await in fear
> What, their deeds according, God will doom to them
> For their life's reward! *L* and *F* are trembling,
> Waiting, sad with care. Sore I now remember me
> Of the wounds of sins wrought by me of old,
> Or of late within the world.

"Weeping, I mourn them with tears. All too late I shamed me of my evil deeds; while as yet body and soul voyaged in health together on the earth. So I pray that every man, who shall read this song of mine, may think of me and ask of God that He, the Helm of Heaven, may bring me help in that great Day." This is the personal cry in the *Juliana*, and it is made more personal by his appeal for prayer to his hearers.

In the *Christ*, which is the next poem we know to be his, this note of melancholy continues, but with a difference. He is still hard pressed with the result of ancient wrong-doing. "How are we troubled," he cries, "through our own desires! Weak, I wander, stumbling and forlorn. Come, King of men, tarry not too long; we need thy mercy that we may do the better things." But there is also another note—the note of peace almost attained, of a modest and chastened joy, and these two mix their music, like life and death, throughout the poem. The personal passage in which he records his name in its runic letters belongs to his sorrow. He is looking forward to the coming of Christ to judgment, and fear holds him for a time. "I dread," he says, "the sterner doom, because I did not keep faithfully what in books my

Saviour bade me; therefore shall I see terror and vengeance for my sin, as full well I know"—

797. Then the *Courage-hearted* quakes, when the King he hears
Speak the words of wrath— Him the wielder of the Heavens—
Speak to those who once on earth but obeyed him weakly,
While as yet their *Yearning pain* and their *Need* most easily
Comfort might discover.

"These shall await their judgment;" but he has now turned from his own fate to the overthrow of all the earth, comparing its ancient destruction by a flood of water to its coming destruction by a flood of fire,—and into three of the words he sets the remaining letters of his name, omitting the E—

805. Gone is then the *Winsomeness*
Of the Earth's adornments! What to *Us* as men belonged
Of the joys of life was locked, long ago, in *Lake-flood*,[1]
All the *Fee* on earth.

Thus he records his name in a passage as sad as that in the *Juliana*. But a change, a progress has taken place in his mind; the sadness is no longer unrelieved. Only a few lines farther on, at line 851, occurs that lovely strain (translated vol. i. 256) in which he describes the voyagers upon Life's sea, and how, "at last, after the frightful stream of overwhelming waves, help came, and the Spirit-Son of God led us into the haven of salvation which the Heavenly Father had outspanned for us." Peace and holy hope had then entered his heart, and the close of the *Christ* is a triumphant song of the bliss of those who hunger and thirst no more. So far then, without any theory, we may see into the story of his heart. With this new restfulness and comfort the note of the *Phœnix* agrees. The *Phœnix*

[1] Lake-floods, is *Lagu*, and means the great water of the Flood; but I have kept the word Lake, in order to retain the letter L. in Cynewulf's name.

is an unsigned poem of Cynewulf's, written, it is most likely, after the *Christ*. In it he has passed from doubt and fear into a rapture of faith. Passage after passage is full of that lyric joy which, men tell us, belongs, at least in the early days of that bright conviction, to those who feel themselves saved. "The Lord of Victories we shall see"—so ends the *Phœnix*,—"world without end; and with laud perennial sing praise to Him, happy with angels, Hallelujah!"

Between the *Christ* and the *Elene* I am inclined to place the *Fates of the Apostles*, and I should still give it this position, even if it be, as Mr. Gollancz suggests, the epilogue to the *Andreas*. The personal passage in that poem containing the poet's signature, conjectured long since, by Wülker, to exist was lately discovered at Vercelli by Professor Napier. Cynewulf has said to his readers, alluding to the runes he is going to insert: "Here may find out the wise in forethinking, whosoever joyeth him in songs, what man it is that wrought this lay." The runic letters of his name now follow, but not, as in the other poems, in order. They begin with F, the last letter of his name; W, U, and L follow; then come C and Y. "Wealth (*F*eoh) stands at an end; earls enjoy it on earth, but they and it cannot abide together in this world's life. Joy (*Wyn*) shall fall away; our (*Ur*) joy upon the earth. Then drop asunder the fair trappings of the body, as Water (*Lagu*) glides away." The next two lines contain C and Y, but N has been obliterated. Mr. Gollancz restores them thus. "Then the bold warrior (*Cene*) and the afflicted wretch (*Yfel*) shall crave for help in the anxious watches of the night, but Destiny (*Nyd*) o'errules, the king exacts

their service." "Now thou canst tell," Cynewulf goes on, "who has here made himself known to men." Then he repeats the cry in the *Juliana*. He asks again for prayer; for "I must, henceforth, alone, search out my long home, a land lying where I know not. Strange dwellings are they, that land and that home; strange to me, strange to all, save we hold fast to the Spirit of God. All the more zealously let us cry unto God, praying for a home in the height where the King of Angels granteth the spotless an unending meed. Now for ever His praise be great and His might abide ever-youthful, everlasting, over all the universe." Thus the strain of regret for the fading of the world is again mingled with Cynewulf's higher strain of faith.

This passage leads us on to another personal passage in the *Elene*. It is like a rough sketch of the completed picture in the *Elene*; just as the use of the heroic manner and the words of Sagadom in the introduction and body of the *Fates of the Apostles* are, as it were, a trial beforehand of the new heroic manner and verse which he was to use in the *Elene*. Indeed, it is this double impression of a "study," as it were, for more finished work which induces me, in spite of its weakness and dulness, to place the *Fates of the Apostles* here, so late in Cynewulf's life. Otherwise it is scarcely credible that its conventional verse could be written between the *Christ* and the *Elene*, when Cynewulf was at the zenith of his power. If it be right to place it here, it must have been written to order, and at a time when he was depressed or ill; and such strange descents in force and imagination are not uncommon in the history of poets—men who are an uneasy sea, ebbing and flowing, none knoweth

why. Fluctuation is everywhere written in Cynewulf's work.[1]

But when we get to the *Elene* we are in the presence of a poet whose last known work, written, as he tells us, when he was advanced in years, was done with his full power, and in a new fashion of thought and verse. Yet there is little of old age in it. The spirit of it is almost as young as that of the *Riddles*. He uses, with fuller power and with more art than he has before done, the quick-hammering strains of the short epic line. He uses, with the greatest freedom, the old saga-phrases of warfare by land and sea; and in order to use them, he leaves his original behind and invents the course of the battle with the Huns and the expedition to Greece. It is as if he had received a new impulse of song, as if a fresh range of work had opened for him. Instead of becoming less the artist as age grows on, he becomes more the artist.

This is a curious point of character, and I have a theory concerning it which, if it be true, illustrates the biography of his soul. As long as he was troubled in mind about his sins, lately joined to the band of converted sinners, he kept his poetry clear of all the heathen phrases, of all the forms of heroic poetry; and this may have been urged on him by the pious who dreaded his relapse. But when his soul was fully at rest, as we leave it in the *Christ*, his original bardic

[1] I leave this as it was written, because I am not sure that I can as yet agree with Mr. Gollancz that the *Fates of the Apostles* is the epilogue to the *Andreas*, and therefore that the *Andreas* was written by Cynewulf. I wish I could at once confess that he is right, for then the difficulty of the dulness of the *Fates* at this time of Cynewulf's life, would no longer exist. The *Fates* would then appear only as a tag to a brilliant piece of work like the *Andreas* done with Cynewulf's full power. No one would then ask that the epilogue should be as good as the poem it follows; we should judge the *Fates of the Apostles* from quite a different standpoint.

nature resumed its sway. Certain now of God's love, full of faith in redemption, he is no longer afraid to use the phrases about war and the passion of war which his forefathers used. He no longer limits his inventiveness to sacred things, nor fears to let his imagination play at ease. The heathen ornaments and illustrations, the epic manner of *Beowulf*, are now brought in to enliven Christian stories. It is as if the old man loved to sniff again the breath of pagan war, as if the very sound of the stock words used by the Scôp in a song of battle, had pleased him as much as they pleased him in his youth. This is a wonderful resurrection, and the *Elene* is written in the air of its morning. This theory of an artistic change in Cynewulf's life is made more probable if we allot the *Andreas* to him. That poem is even bolder than the *Elene* in its use of heroic terms, in its free play of the imagination on the subject matter. It is full of the freshness of a new youth, of an unconventional pleasure in a new artistic world; and it is more individual, more English, more frank than even the *Elene*. It is, if it be Cynewulf's work, the poem of a man who had found new powers in himself, and was enchanted to find them, and to use them. There comes a time in an artist's life when he has learnt to manage his tools so easily, after long labour, that he attains almost automatic facility in execution. Then, since he has no need to give much trouble to execution, ideas stream in upon him in a flood, and he is able to do what he likes with them. Joy and freedom and force fill his soul. He renews his youth, but he has the power to embody ideas fully, a power his youth had not. And this, perhaps, was Cynewulf's now.

It is quite in accordance with this theory that the

personal epilogue of the *Elene* should tell us how he came to write the poem, and that it should recapitulate his life, first in simple verse, and then in a riddling representation under the Runic letters of his name.

"Thus I," so he begins, "old and ready for death in this frail tabernacle"—

1237. Craft of words have woven, wondrously have culled them out
Over it, and o'er it thought, anxiously have sifted,
In the night, my thinking! Never throughly did I know
Rightly of the Rood the truth, till a roomier knowledge
Wisdom had unveiled to the inwit of my soul,
Through a might majestic.

Then he recalls what he had been, how light came to him, how the power of song returned; God Himself restored it—

1243. I was stained with mis-deeds,
Snared with sins was I, with my sorrows tortured,
Bound with bitter thoughts, burdened sore with troubles,
Ere the Lord gave lore to me through a light-imparting Form;[1]
For my solace, now I'm old! 'Tis a gift unshameable
Me the mighty King has measured; in my mind outpoured it;
Dazzling has unfolded it, day by day for it made room!
He my bone-coffer unbound, He my breast-locker unwound,
He unlocked the singing art, that I used with all my heart,
With a will, the world within.

Then he recurs to his subject of the Cross of Christ, "the tree of glory," and at first speaks of the story he has just told, of the Invention of the Cross, and of his meditation of it. "Not only once, but often, I had inward thinking of the tree of glory, before I unveiled the wonder which enwrapt the bright wood; as in books, and in the course of history, and in writings, I found all made known that concerned that beacon light of victory."

[1] I suggest that this may mean the form, the vision of the Cross—that is, if we take the *Dream of the Rood* to be written by Cynewulf; but the words might be translated, "in His luminous way," or "through light-bearing office."

But now, at line 1257, as I explain the passage, he turns from the story of Helena to speak directly of the story of his own soul. He calls to remembrance his own *Finding of the Cross* in his life; it is of the hour of his conversion that he is thinking when he says, "Till *then* I myself was crushed"—till the hour I found the Rood in my heart. Here is the passage, and though made obscure by the various meanings which may be given to the runes in which he signs his name, the general biographical direction of it is clear, and so is the state of his soul—

1257. Aye till then was ill-content!
Beaten by care-billows, *C* began to fail,
Though he in the mead-hall took of many treasures,
Of the appled gold. *Y* was wailing sorely!
N was his companion; harrowing was the grief he brought,
'Twas a Rune that cramped him,[1] when before him *E*
Paced along the mile-paths, proudly raced along,
Prankt with woven wires. *W* is weakened now!
After years, my pleasure and my youth are passed away,
And my ancient pride! *U* was in the times of old
Once a gleam of youth. Now the gone-by days
Far away have faded when the fated hour came—
Vanished, with delight of living, as when *L* doth fall apart,
Flood that follows flood. *F* for every soul
Is but lent below the lift, and the land's adornments
Vanish all the welkin under, to the wind most like
When in sight of men, roaring, it up-steps the sky,
Hunts the clouds along, hurries raging on,[2]
And all suddenly again silent is become,
In its clampèd chambers closely prisoned now;
Pinned with mighty pressure down.[3]

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[1] *Enge rune*, "a narrow rune." A secret grief that bound his soul in a prison of pain. The rune itself may be alluded to.

[2] This is the old imagination of the Wild-Hunt in the sky, which Grimm traces back to the worship and name of Woden. But I think it is older far than Wodèn.

[3] C. stands for *Cene*. "The *keen warrior* began to fail."
Y. stands for *Yfel*. "The *wretched one* was wailing."
N. stands for *Nyd*. "*Need* was his companion."
E. stands for *Eh*. "When before him the *Horse*."
W. stands for *Wyn*. "*Joy* is weakened now."
U. stands for *Ur*. "*Ours* was once the radiance of youth."

"So has all this world passed away," and so is Cynewulf's melancholy note struck again; but he does not remain in it. He passes on into triumph, and the *Elene* ends with a picture of the righteous, victorious in beauty.

With the *Elene* the poems signed by Cynewulf come to an end; but there is yet another poem, the conclusion at least of which I believe to be written by him, and this conclusion was, in my opinion, the last thing he ever wrote. This poem is the *Dream of the Rood*, and the questions regarding its authorship, and the poem itself, will be hereafter treated. At present, I assume that the conclusion is his, and it closes then this sketch of his character. Cynewulf, looking back when all his poems were finished, has resolved to place on record and to glorify the Dream and the happy hour he had when first he knew Christ; and then, saying farewell to life, to express his joy in the heaven whither he was going. "The Rood of the Lord which I erst beheld" (*aer sceawode*) is a phrase which seems to say that he is speaking of a vision seen at the beginning of his Christian life. He tells that vision in the previous part of the poem, either in his own words, or in editing an old fragmentary poem on the same subject, and he tells it always in the past tense. When the story is told he begins at line 122 his personal confession, and the resemblance it bears to the conclusion of the *Elene*, and the spirit of the verse, full at first of his pathetic individuality, and then marked by his rushing and exultant manner when he is engaged in hope or

L. stands for *Lagu*. "As when Water falls apart. Day after day, like wave after wave, falls apart, the one from the other."

F. stands for *Feoh*. "*Wealth* is but lent" etc.

praise, are so like Cynewulf's work, and so unlike the work of any other Anglo-Saxon poet, that I cannot see why a critic should go out of his way to allot the poem, or at least this conclusion of it, to another writer.

The first lines of this personal confession are still retrospective. They tell how he felt immediately after the Dream, which I place at the time of his conversion, and as its cause. He felt "blithe of mood," for he was forgiven; "passionate in prayer, eager for death,"—common feelings in the hearts of men in the first hours of their religious enthusiasm—

122. Then I prayed me to the Tree, pleasant of my mood,
With a mickle eagerness, where alone I was
With a smallish company; and my spirit was
Passioned for departure.

This is followed—so I read the passage—by two half-lines which tell us that he did not die, as he then desired, but was forced to live on through many days of sorrow—

Far too much have I endured
In all long-wearying days.

So far the verses seem retrospective. Now he turns to the present and describes his actual state of soul—

126. *Now* the hope of life is mine
So that I may seek— and with service due,
All alone, and oftener than all other men,
Honour Victory's Tree! Will I have to that,
Mickle in my mind! I have made my refuge
Ready near the Rood.[1]

Then he remembers all the friends who have gone before him, and sings his death-song, waiting in joyful hope to meet those he loved at the evening-meal in

[1] "*I have directed my defence to the Rood*" is literal, but seems without meaning.

heaven. "Few are left me now of the men in power I knew"—

131. Few of friends on earth! They have fared from hence,
Far away from worldly joys, wended to the King of Glory:
Now in Heaven they live, near to their High Father,
Wonning in their glory! And I wait me here,
(Living) day by day till my Lord His Rood,
Which I looked upon, long ago on earth,
From this fleeting life fetch my soul away:—
And shall bring me then where the bliss is mickle,
Happiness in Heaven! There the High God's folk
To the Evening-meal are set, there is everlasting joy!
And He there shall place me where thenceforth I may
Dwell in (winsome) glory; well among the saints
In delight rejoice! May the Lord befriend me,
Who upon the earth long ago has suffered
On the gallows-tree for the guilt of men!
There He did release us, there our life He gave us,
And the heavenly Home.

At last, with a happy reversion to the earlier theme of which he was so fond—to the deliverance of the Old Testament saints from Hades—he turns from himself, now going home, to the triumphant home-coming of Jesus—

148. Hope was then renewed,
With fresh blossoming and bliss, for the souls who'd borne the fire:
Strong the Son with conquest was, on that (soaring) path;
Mighty and majestical,[1] when with multitudes He came,
With the host of spirits, to the home of God:—
He the Almighty King— to the Angels' bliss,
And to all the Holy Ones, who in Heaven long before
Had abode in glory— when the Omnipotent came home,
Where His lawful heirship lay— God the Lord of all!

This is the close of the *Dream of the Rood.* It is the close, in my opinion, of the work and life of Cynewulf. If it be truly his, we bid him farewell, with thoughts satisfied in quiet. His regret has merged in rapture. We see him pass away "as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing, as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

[1] "*Majestical*" is *successful*, and "*home*" in the next line is literally *realm.*

CHAPTER XXIV

THE SIGNED POEMS OF CYNEWULF

The *Juliana* is in the Exeter Book. In placing it first among the poems of Cynewulf, after the earlier Riddles, I differ from the greater number of the critics. I cannot class it after the *Christ*, for the *Christ* is written with all the poetic power which Cynewulf possessed, and a poet in his power does not fall back in a long poem into conventional work. He may do a short poem like the *Fates of the Apostles* in a weary manner, but not a long piece like the *Juliana*. I must then place it where it is.

Its sources are the *Acta S. Julianae, virginis, martyris.* Cynewulf has taken the legend and worked it up with some care for unity of feeling and for accumulating development. Juliana is led from triumph to triumph, till she receives the crown of life in death. One episode after another carries on the action, and these episodes are couched in dialogue. There is a leading thought, a special aim, and these are conducted, through such play and clash of passion as Cynewulf could conceive, to the final purification of the heroine whose image at last is left alone upon our minds. There is then a certain art in the poem. But the art is not good, and the work is poorly done.

Abrupt changes, crude dialogue, wearisome repetition, but by no means so wearisome as we meet in the first part of *Guthlac*, disfigure Cynewulf's recast of the legend. I have a fancy that he was unconsciously bored by the whole matter, that Christian legend was so new to his genius that he worked it mechanically. Nevertheless, there are certain curious and clever things in the poem which I select in the following account of it.

In the days of Maximian there was a prince named Heliseus, a cruel persecutor of the Christians, whose heart began to love Juliana, daughter of Africanus, but she said nay to him unless he would become a Christian. "No torments," she cried, "will make me waver from these words of mine"; so resolute is the woman! It is on this quality in her character, which Cynewulf sometimes makes into grimness, that he builds all the action of the poem. Her contempt works bitterly in Heliseus, and he and Juliana's father meet, "lean their spears together, sick with sins," and resolve to slay her if she do not yield. The sketch of the two furious men, set over against that of the delicate girl, is well conceived but ill wrought. The father speaks to his child, at first with love, and then with wrath. The dialogue which here is crisp, sets forcibly before us Cynewulf's conception of the strong-hearted heroine of the Cross. Yet he does not neglect to contrast with this the charm and tenderness of her womanhood. Her father calls her his "dearest daughter, sweetest to his imagination, his only one on earth, the light of his eyes." The people wonder at her beauty; Heliseus himself, when she is brought before him, breaks out, "Thou art my sweetest sunshine, Juliana; fulness of youth thou hast, infinite gifts of grace, and bloom of loveliness."

But her charm, which Cynewulf means us to keep in mind, for he brings it forth again at the close, now slips into the background, and henceforth he paints only the Amazon of the faith. Through one strife after another she passes, always firm as rock, always triumphant, but fixed as fate. The glory of the strength of the soul against wealth and physical pain, against the force of the world and the allurements of love, against the devil himself (always the art-motive of martyrdom), is seized on and told by Cynewulf, often at wearisome length, but as it were in a series of lays which, separately recited in the monastic hall, must have been effective. She is tortured the whole day and is victorious. Then she is thrown into prison, and a quasi-epic character is given to the poem by the introduction of the supernatural. As she sits in her cell, where her "eternal guard and companion is the Holy Ghost," one of the devils, sent by the chief Fiend, appears to her in angel-shape and bids her sacrifice to the Gods. "Whence art thou?" she cries; "I am," he replies, "an angel of God, and I bid thee save thyself." She answers by an impassioned prayer to God that He will keep her true, and reveal to her what kind of man is this—this "flier through the lift," who bids her fall away from God. And a voice answers out of the sky—"Grasp at the wicked one and hold him fast, until he tell thee all concerning his works." And the devil is forced to stay and talk all the night long, to his great trouble and dismay. Cynewulf follows his original closely enough, but a certain grim humour steals into the account which seems to be his own. When the devil has told many of the wrongs he has done to men, Juliana is not content. "Say on," she says with endless curiosity,

"thou poor, uncleanly spirit"; and the fiend, driven to distraction, "amazed with the woman," becomes impatient, breaks out into complaint, "This is a bitter business," he says, "an immeasurable oppression. I must tell all thou askest. Yet were I to speak all a summer-long day, I could never tell all my wickedness." Four times he despairingly tries to escape, four times she forces him back and insists on his telling all his crime. He tries compliment in vain. "No man was ever so brave as thou, O holy One, to lay hands on me; not one on all the earth was ever so high-spirited; not one of the patriarchs, nor yet of the prophets, could crush me as thou hast done, nor bind in bonds the strength my father gave to me, who sent me from the dark to sweeten sin to thee. Misery has come of that, and heavy battle. Never shall I dare, after this bitter punishment, rejoice amid my comrades for this voyage, when I shall bring back my wretched failure to my joyless dwelling."

At this point, for now it is day, and the governor summons Juliana, the devil, bewailing and beseeching Juliana to let him go, is let loose. "There is not a woman in the world," he cries, "of greater spirit, nor among maids one mightier in anger than thou art." The episode of her final martyrdom follows. She endures all, and every pain enhances her beauty. At last Heliseus bids her be beheaded. The fiend returns at this moment and sings a scornful song. Juliana glances at him, and he takes to flight. "Woe is me, accursed," he cries, "a second time she will disgrace me as before." Freed and victorious she makes now her last speech to the people, and here her softness and sweetness return. She is again the tender maiden, the loving spirit. "Peace be with

you and true love for ever," she says and dies. Immediately on her death follows the death of Heliseus, robbed of his life at sea among the hungry waves; and in the den profound of hell none of his thegns received from him any more, on the benches of the beer-hall, rings or appled gold. But songs of praise went with the maiden's corse to the grave; and with this contrast the poem closes and is followed by the personal epilogue of which I have already spoken.

The *Christ* is a poem of far finer quality. It is formed into a whole. It is not a translation of a legend, it is original. It has an epic march, or something that resembles it. Cynewulf has recovered his imagination, his freedom of movement, his shaping power. His dignified manner has come upon him, passion moves him, he rushes at times into an exalted strain, and he does this with ease; and he has sometimes even an heroic manner both in pathos and joy. There is an immense step between the *Juliana* and the *Christ*.

The *Christ* is contained in the Exeter Book, and it is the first poem in that book. But several leaves are lost. At the 8*a* leaf the poem begins, and it comes to a conclusion at leaf 32*b*. We owe to Dietrich the proof that all the hymnic poems in this section, which before his time were held to be separate, and some of them by different writers, are one connected whole, and written by one poet whose name is signed, concealed in runic letters, in the second part. He arranged these apparent fragments into their right order and said, "This is one poem, and Cynewulf is its author." His divisions of the poem were guesses. He had no opportunity of seeing the manuscript. It has now been divided rightly by Mr. Gollancz in

accordance with indications in the manuscript. Part first celebrates the Nativity; part second, the Ascension; and the third part, the Day of Judgment. The first ends at line 438; the second at line 865. As to its sources, the first part follows the Gospel of St. Matthew for the story of the Incarnation. The second makes a free use of Gregory's homily on the Ascension. (Homil. xxix.) The third relies, as Professor Cook has shown, on the Latin Hymn—*De die judicii*, to which Baeda refers in his treatise, *De Metris*. The 10th homily of Gregory is also used in the second and third parts. But one can scarcely say that these were sources; they are, even when whole passages are followed, rather assistances. The poem is truly original, and originally conceived. It is the history, I might say the epic, of salvation.

Though I have used the word epic in regard to this poem, it is not an epic in any true sense of the word. It is more a series of hymns, at least at the beginning, closed by choric outbursts of praise. I fancy, however—for the third part is much more continuously wrought than the first or the second—that when the poet had written a number of these short pieces, a larger aim dawned on him, and then fully rose in his mind; and that then he determined to work his three subjects into a connected whole. If he went back for this purpose to his earlier labours, he did not fulfil his purpose well. The weaving together of the first part is not successful. The different pieces remain separate lays. In the second part the two subjects—the Ascension itself, and the ascension with Christ of the souls delivered from Hades into Heaven—might easily have been made into a continuous narrative if Cynewulf had thought of weaving them

into one piece when he began. As it is, they remain distinct, loosely and awkwardly bound together. The third part shows, I think, that he conceived the Last Judgment as a whole before he began to write it; and it is then, when this was finished, that I suggest he went back and did his best to weld all the parts together, but without a complete success. Nevertheless, of all Cynewulf's poems the *Christ* is the weightiest, because in it he has made his greatest struggle towards an artistic unity, and has best shown in a sustained effort his constructive power. It is, moreover, essentially the work of a poet, though of a poet untrained in composition. The rushing outbursts of praise—the lyrics of the work—are poetry of a higher fervour than anything in the Caedmonic verse. In these he reaches his nearest approach to a fine style; and, as always with a poet, his style is a revelation of his character. We seem to feel the man himself when, in the contrast so natural to an artist, this trumpet-tongued piety and joy is succeeded by personal passages full of pathetic regret, repentance, and humility. In praise and prayer, in mournfulness and exultation, he was equally passionate.

The dramatic pieces are vividly represented, and the pictorial parts—the pictures of the ascent from Hades, of the opening of the Last Judgment, of the deluge of flame, of the blazing rood streaming with blood and set up from earth to heaven, of Christ pointing to it while he speaks, of the final ascension of the good—are done with all the poetic force of the writer of the riddle of the hurricane. I need scarcely draw any further attention to the personal epilogue except to say that no one who was not a true poet could have done it so well. There is nothing

more difficult in poetry than to reach charm in a personal passage, and especially when it is set forward, as it is here, in a form which is half a riddle.

The mutilated manuscript of the *Christ* opens happily enough, by almost a fortunate chance. The broken first line has only one word "cyninge"; to the King. It is not of course the title of the poem, but it would serve that purpose. An invocation to Christ to comfort, preserve, and glorify His own work, the Church, is preceded by an address to Him as the Wall-stone—that is, the Corner-stone—

2. Lo! Thou art the Wall-stone which the workmen once
From the work rejected! Well it Thee becometh
That Thou hold the headship of this hall of glory;
And the broad-spaced walls of the flint unbreakable,
With a fastening firm, fitly knit together;
That among the Earth-burgs all with sight of eyes
May for ever marvel!
Master of Magnificence!
Now through mighty wisdom manifest Thy proper work,
True-fast and triumphant-clear!

So the poem begins. A prayer follows that the Ruler who holds the locks, who opens life, will pity His people and make them worthy. We speak thus in our need, cries Cynewulf, becoming personal; "we who in prison yearn for the sunlight, who must turn us to the narrow shore, cut off from our Fatherland." Then the Virgin and her miraculous conception of Christ enter the poem, and immediately, in one of those lyric outbursts for which the *Christ* is remarkable, Jerusalem the holy city is addressed—

50. See! O sight of Peace, sacred Hierusalem!
Thou, of kingly thrones the choicest, Citadel of Christ,
Native seat of angels, of the soothfast souls
That for ever sit, they alone, at rest in thee,
In their splendours, singing joy. Never sign of stain
In that settled dwelling-stead shall be seen at all;

But afar shall flee away every fault from thee,
All the curse and all the conflict.

As in the epic of Dante, Jerusalem is the centre of the universe. "The wide creation and the roof of heaven look on it from every side, and now the King of Heaven draws near to dwell in it. Bliss He brings thee, loosens thy bonds; He knows men's straitened need!"

At this point the dramatic dialogue begins, which may be of some literary importance. It seems to be the first dawning in our literature of the Mystery Play. I cannot but think that this part of the poem was written to be recited in the church, or in the market-place on a stage, and that the characters were taken by different persons. If so, we ought to look on the next few lines with the interest which should gather round the beginning of the English drama. The dialogue passages in the Caedmonic poems are such as we are accustomed to in epical verse. Here it is different. The characters are dramatically disposed; a certain scenic effect is made for their entrance, a choir seems to await them, as in the first lines I translate, where Mary, coming into view, is hailed by the dwellers of Jerusalem, and they call to her to tell her tale[1]—

71. In the glorious glory, hail! Gladness thou of women,
Loveliest of maids in the lap of every land,
That the ocean-rovers ever listened speech of,
Make us know the mystery that hath moved to thee from Heaven.

[1] Since I first wrote this passage I have seen Wülker's note in his *Grundriss* on the "Dramatische Bestrebungen" of the Anglo-Saxon poems, and though I do not feel inclined to give up the idea that these hymns were sung in parts in the church—which he himself conceives possible,—I think that all notion of their being represented on a stage, or dramatised in any true sense of the term, must be given up.

"Mary, ever full of triumph," answers[1]—

> 89. What is now this wonder at the which ye stare,
> Making here your moan, mournfully a-wailing—
> Son of Solima; daughter thou of Solima?

"Ask no more; the mystery is not known to men; but the guilt of Eve is closed, the curse is overcome, the poorer sex is glorified. Hope is won that men may dwell with the Father of truth for ever."

A chorus to Christ follows this dialogue. "Hail, Earendel![2] sooth-fast, sun-bright; Sunbeam that enlightenest all the tides of time, come thyself, illumine those long since wrapt in darkness. Thanks to the Lord triumphant that he willed to send us himself." Then, turning to a favourite subject, the chorus speaks of the souls that long waited for Jesus, bound in the abyss, "weary, tormented thralls, worn with burning bitter tears." And the poet, in his swift impassioned changes, impersonates the souls in prison. They become the chorus. "Come to us here," they cry, "sad captives in spirit, kingly show forth thy mercy, O Christ the Saviour! Leave not so great a throng behind thy going hence." Then the dialogue begins again. Joseph arrives sad and troubled, on the scene, and Mary turns to him—

> 164. *Mary.* Ea, la, Joseph mine, child of Jacob (old)!
> Kinsman thou of David, king of a great fame,
> Must thou give up now grace so deeply set—
> Let my love be lost?
> *Joseph.* Lo, this instant I
> Deeply am distressed, all undone of honour.

[1] Many previous lines concerning the miracle of the Incarnation weaken here the dialogue.

[2] *Earendel.* This means some brilliant star. Grimm suggests a connection with *Orvandels-tá.* Orwendel's toe which, frozen as Thor carried Orwendel through the sky, broke off. Thor threw it at the sky and it became a star. The word in Anglo-Saxon glossaries is translated *jubar.* Cynewulf used it to signify Christ, and as he is here speaking of Jesus as descended from David, I have no doubt he was thinking of the text in Rev. xxii., where Jesus says "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star."

"Sore speeches have I heard, insult to thee, mocking scorn of me. Tears I must shed, yet God may cure"

174. Easily the anguish deep   that is in my heart,
And console me sad!   Sorrow! sorrow! young girl!
Maid Maria!

Mary.   Why bemoanest thou,
Criest now care-wearied?   Never crime in thee
Have I ever found;   yet thou utterest words—
As if thou thyself   wert all thronged with sin!

Joseph—somewhat indignant with this feminine turning of the tables on himself (if this be the right allocation of the dialogue)—answers, with a certain sharpness but with dignity, that he has had already too much of bale from this child-bearing, but that silence or speaking is equally ill to him. If he speak, the daughter of David must die; if he be silent, he will have to live false-sworn, ill-famed, among the folk-men. Mary replies to this appeal in a speech of seventeen lines, with which the dialogue closes; nor is it in this form again renewed. It is as if Cynewulf wished to show his hand in this kind of art, and then laid it by. What does follow is another choric invocation which celebrates the begetting of Christ; and using the story of the creation of light as an allegory of the birth of Jesus, cries, "Come, Lord of triumph, graciously visit us; mercifully bless the earth"—

251. And the golden gates,   that in gone-by days,
All too long of yore,   locked together stood—
Order now to open,   O exalted Lord of Heaven!
And then seek us out,   through Thy very self a-coming
Meek to middle-earth!   Of thy mercies we have need;
For the wolf accursed,   beast that works in darkness,
Lord, thy sheep hath now   scatterèd asunder,
Driven them devious, far.

"Save us then from the Baleful One, from the Slayer of the mind. Helm of all created things, free us from the Scather of men!"

The next canto celebrates the Virgin Mary, and takes, in order perhaps to bind it up with the preceding, the motive of the golden door, which here is made to mean Mary herself through whom Christ entered humanity. "O thou glorious lady of this middle earth," so it begins. She is the ring-adorned bride of heaven's Lord. The thegns of Christ, highest in heaven, name her Lady of the angel-hosts, and of the tribes of men, and of those who abide in hell; because she brought her sinless maidenhood to God. Isaiah [Ezekiel] spake of old concerning her. O'er all the land he looked and saw where stablished stood

> 308. Glorious an Ingang! Gate immeasurable!
> All embossed it was with unpricèd gems,
> Wound with wondrous bands.[1]

Only God shall make these gates resplendent, and Christ close them after Him for ever as with a key. We gaze on the Child on thy bosom, O plead for us with Him"; and this hymn, as I may call it, to the Virgin closes with another choric prayer to Christ.

The fifth canto begins with an invocation to the Trinity; and there is a fine passage concerning the singing and the flight around the throne of the praising Seraphim—

> 393. Ever and for ever all adornèd with the sky,
> Far and wide they worship God the wielder of the world,
> And with wingèd plumes watch around the Presence
> Of the Lord Almighty, of the Lord Eternal!
> All around the throne of God, thronging they are eager,
> Which of them the closest may to Christ the Saviour
> Flashing play in flight, in the garths of peacefulness!

[1] A noble doorway, *æþelic ingong*. I have put this into the text because I think that the writer had in his eye the cover of a great missal, as well as such a church door as we see in Norway.

And thus they sing—

403. Holy art Thou, holy, high Prince of archangels,
Thou true Lord of triumph, Thou art holy evermore!
King of kings art Thou, ever dwelleth Thy dominion
Over men on earth; and to all eternity
Worshipped wide and far, Lord of warrior hosts!
For Thou hast full-filled all the field of earth and heaven
With Thy splendour, shield of fighters!
Helm of all things! in the highest, be to Thee
Everlasting welfare, laud upon the earth,
Shining midst of men.

And now this first part of the poem is closed by a prayer that, with some feeling for art, refers back to the wonder of the Incarnation with which it began, but which itself is nothing but the same pious thoughts we have so often had before. This repetition is so frequent in the *Christ* that I am more and more inclined to think that these tails at the end of the narrative or dialogue passages were sung by full choirs in church, by the listeners in the monastery halls, or perhaps by the whole band of some mission expedition in town or village, when the chief singers had first sung the narrative and dialogue.

The second portion of the poem is taken up with the Ascension and that which followed and preceded it. The beginning links back to the Nativity, and then asks, with Gregory's homily—"Let a wise man seek out how it happened that though there were angels at the birth of Christ, yet they were not arrayed in white garments." *Now* when the "great leader gathered his thegns together at Bethany" before his Ascension, they did appear in white robes. After this fantastic question another half-dramatic dialogue begins. Christ speaks, and the verses embody the words of farewell in the Bible, with an addition such as would be made by a poet whose

people had lately been idolatrous, and who were even while he wrote living in warfare. "Break the idols," Christ says, "overthrow them, abhor them; quench strife and hatred, sow peace among men." Then the Angels come, the King departs. Light glitters around his head, and the angels speak the first words of a new dialogue.

"Why do ye stay, why stand ye here, ye men of Galilee? . . . The Lord has mounted upward to his native home, to his Fatherland." The Apostles answer—

517. O how fain would we in this fashion, with this band,
With this cheerful company, o'er the cover of the Heaven,
To the brightening Burg, bring the Lord along.

The reception into heaven naturally follows the Ascension, and is slightly touched. The angels come to meet Christ; immeasurable joy fills the Glory, and Jesus takes his high seat, ruling in splendour mid-earth and the majestic host. So ends line 557. The order of the poem now becomes confused. An episode is introduced which concerns the Harrowing of Hell, an event which the legend always places after the Resurrection, and not after the Ascension. I conjecture that Cynewulf had these lines by him (ll. 558-585), and that they belonged to another poem, of which the *Descent into Hell*, in the Exeter Book, may be a fragment. When he was refitting the *Christ* into a whole, he inserted these lines which are full of imagination, and took no particular pains to fit them properly into their place; or he thought, perhaps, that they might represent a hymn sung in heaven after the Ascension. The hymn would then describe the event, also an ascension, which had taken place forty days before when Christ brought up to Paradise the souls from Hades.

Even if that be the case, the passage is most unhappily built together.

The episode (ll. 558-585) is really a choric hymn supposed to be sung by the host of angels who come forth from the gates of heaven on the day of the Resurrection to meet and welcome the Old Testament saints as, rising from Hades, they mount the sky with Christ. The scene is laid in mid-space. The angels from heaven have met the ascending bands, and when Cynewulf sees this mighty meeting in his vision, the warrior wakens in him, and the speech the angelic leader makes to his followers is such as a heathen chief might have made to his Lord returning from war with the spoils of victory. "Lo," the Angel cries, pointing to the approaching host of Christ and the delivered souls—

558. See, the holy Hero   Hell hath now bereaved
Of the tribute all   that in times of old,
In that (lawless) war,   so unlawfully it gorged!
Overthrown are now,   and in torment quick,
Hafted down and humbled   in the Hell's abyss,
All the champions of the Fiend,   cut off from their prowess;
Those who strove with Him   might not speed in battle
With their weapon-whirlings   when the warrior king of glory,
He the Helm of Heaven's realm,   had arrayed the war
Right against his ancient foes,   with his only might.
Then he drew from durance,   from the devilish burg,
This the dearest of all spoils,   this unnumbered folk.
Lo! the host itself   here you gaze upon!
Now the Saviour of all souls   wills to seek the throne
Where is given grace to spirits,[1]—   He of God the proper bairn,
After his war-playing.

The speaker now turns from his own following to speak to the souls who have come from Hades, and to welcome them; and then turns back again to look

[1] "Wills to seek the gift-stool of spirits."

towards the gates of Heaven, and bids them unclose. It is well imagined—

> 575. Forward now to friends, frankly march along,
> With a gladdened heart!
> O, ye gates unclose,
> He will into you, He of all the Wielder!
> He the King into his city, He, Creation's Lord,
> With no little army, now will lead his folk
> To the joy of joys.

And the speech ends with a proclamation of peace and of the covenant of God with men. It is followed at line 586 by a *résumé* of the whole matter of the poem up to the present point, and this, I think, came originally after the 557 line before the insertion of the hymn. There is a passage in it which needs to be noted, because, while the alliterative stress is carefully observed, each limb of the verse is set in rhyme. "Every one," it says, "may now choose"—

> 591. As of Hell the scornful story, so of Heaven the noble glory;
> As the lightsome light, so the loathly night;
> Glory's rush of gladness, or of gloomy souls the sadness;
> As with devils all discord, so delight with God the Lord;
> Torment grievous with the grim, glory with the seraphim,
> Either life or death!

Therefore it is fitting to thank the Lord. "He gives us food and the fulness of goods";

> 605. Welfare o'er the wide-land and a weather gentle,
> 'Neath the shelter of the sky! Sun and moon alike,
> Kingliest of the constellations, candles of the Heaven,
> Shine on every man that on earth abideth;
> Dew and rain descend, and they draw abundance forth!

But chiefly thanks are due to him of whom Job spoke, as of a bird, and well: for he winged his way to the angels' home; and thence again, at one with the Spirit, flew down at Pentecost and gave gifts to men. And here intervenes a passage of which there is a parallel

in the *Gifts of Men*—a common motive for poetry, which, treated by Cynewulf, may boast itself of a finer poetic quality than is elsewhere shown—[1]

664. Sage the way of speech that He sendeth unto one
To the memory of his mind through the spirit of his mouth—
Noble mastery of thought. Many, many things
He can sing and say; in his soul is fastened
Weighty wisdom's power! Well another can
With his hand the harp awaken 'fore the heroes loudly,
Greet the glee-beam then. One the godlike law
May aright reveal. One the roaming of the stars
Tells—that wide creation. One the word men speak
Wisefully can write. War-luck on another
In the battle He bestoweth, when the band of shooters
Send the storm of darts o'er the shield's defence,
Winging-work of arrows. Boldly will another
Urge the ocean-wood o'er the salt sea-stream,
Stir the surging deep. One the soaring tree
Can, though steep, ascend. One can smithy well
Steelèd sword and spear. One the spacious ways
Knows and all the plains' outgoing. So to us the Lord,
Bairn of God, His gifts on the grounds of earth divides.

The next two portions which finish the "Ascension" are both of curious interest: the first for its allegorical exposition,[2] in the mediæval manner, of the

[1] The origin of these English descriptions of the various gifts of men has been referred to the texts in 1 Corinthians concerning the gifts of the Spirit, to the Homily of Gregory, and other sources. There was also, I think, an independent heathen song on the matter. It is a subject which was sure to catch the thoughts of men. Homer himself has seized it. "Hector" (says Polydamas, *Iliad* xiii.), "thou art hard to be persuaded by them that would counsel thee; for that God has given thee excellence in the works of war, therefore in council also art thou fain to excel other men in knowledge. But in no wise wilt thou be able to take everything on thyself. For to one man God has given for his portion the works of war, to another the dance, to another the lute and song, but in the heart of yet another hath far-seeing Zeus placed an excellent understanding."—Leaf's Translation.

[2] There is, beginning at line 692, an allegorical simile more fully developed than is usual in Anglo-Saxon poetry. I translate it: "God honoureth His work, even as the Prophet said" (*Ps.* cxxxvi. 7-9).

692. That the holy gems were upheavèd (then)
Stars serene of Heaven, high unspeakably.
Moon and sun! O what may these be,
Gems so glittering bright, if not God Himself?
He is the soothfast shining of the sun,
For the angels, for earth dwellers, ever noble splendour!

text in Canticles; the second for its autobiographical detail, and for the sketch, the little "study," as it were, of the final subject of the Last Judgment. Of the allegorical six leaps of Christ I have already spoken in chapter xi. "So must we men," it ends, "leap from virtue to virtue to the highest height. Great is our need of salvation, for the Accuser"—and the reference is to the deadly arrow-flights of Northern war—

764. Midst the folk of God   forth is sending now
From his bended bow   the embittered shaft.
So that sudden shot   let us stand on guard against,
Lest the point of poison,   bitter-piercing dart,
Stormer of the shield,   sudden-coming craft of foes,
Break in under the bone-locker. Baneful gash that is,
Lividest of wounds!

And now begins the last portion of the "Ascension." It falls into three divisions. The first, while it says that no one need fear the shafts of the Fiend if God shall shield him, suddenly breaks into that remarkable personal passage of which I have already spoken. The "Day of Doom" is near, he cries, "and I—I fear a sterner doom." This personal passage is the first hint of the subject of the third book; and the short sketch, the "study," as I said, for the finished picture of the third part, follows in this fashion—

807.   Then shall all earth-glories
Burn within the bale-fire.   Bright and swift
Rages on the ruddy flame,   wrathfully it strides
O'er the outspread earth;   sunken are the plains;
Burst asunder the burg-steads!   See! the Burning on its way,
Greediest of guests,   gorges pitilessly now,
All the ancient treasures   that of old the heroes held,
While that on the earth   pride abode with them!

When Cynewulf has finished his sketch he becomes

Glimmers (mild) the moon   o'er the middle earth,
Spiritual is that star!   So the Church of God,
Through the congregations   of the True and Just,
Beameth brightly now.

personal again. "O our need is great, before that grim terror to bethink us of God's grace"; and he passes into that lovely sea-suggested passage which I have already translated, and in which his soul stands clear before us. As I have put it into a trotting rhythm before, so now I put it into blank verse, nor is that metre apart from its elegiac strain—

848. O great our need
That we bethink us in this fruitless time,
Ere that grim fear, upon our spirits' grace.
For now is it most like as if on ships
O'er water cold, on ocean's flood, we sail,
Driving the sea-wood through the far-spread deep,
On our sea-steeds. A dangerous stream is this,
Of endless waves, oceans wind-tossed, where we
About this swooning world swing to and fro
Upon the unfathomed road. Hard was our state,
Ere we had sailed across the storm-ridged deep
Safely to land; but then our help arrived,
That led us to the hithe where Healing is—
God's Spirit-Son, who gave us grace to know—
Outlooking o'er the bulwarks of our keel—
Where we should bind with anchors deeply set,
Our old wave-horses, stallions of the sea!
There in that haven, let us stablish Hope,
The which He roomed for us who rules the skies,
When he climbed Heaven, Holy in the height.

And now, at line 866, the Day of Judgment, the third part of the poem, begins. Like a thief in the blackness of night it surprises men. The blithe and shining host, the faithful of the Lord, assemble glorious on Mount Zion. Then Cynewulf, as if suddenly smitten with a vision (and he is the only Anglo-Saxon poet who has these poetic outbursts), breaks into a noble description of the four summoning angels—

878. Therewith from the four far-off corners of the world,
From the regions uttermost of the realm of earth,
All a-glow the angels blow with one accord
Loudly thrilling trumpets. Trembles Middle-Garth

Earth is quaking under men. Right against the going
Of the stars they sound together, strong and gloriously
Sounding and resounding from the south and north,
Wakening from the dead bairns of doughty men,
All aghast from the grey mould ; all the kin of men,
To the dooming of the Lord. Out of that deep sleep
Suddenly they bid them rise.

After that "a blaze of sun comes from the south-east to the hill of Zion," and after the blaze the Son of God, "marvellously countenanced, diversely for the blessed and the lost, bitter for the baleful, benign for the blest." And on each side of him troops of angels and societies of the saints fare their way.

Another outburst of description, touched with a human interest, follows, and it rises in the last lines into imaginative splendour—

930. Deep creation thunders, and before the Lord shall go
Hugest of upheaving fires o'er the far-spread earth !
Hurtles the hot flame, and the heavens burst asunder,
All the firm-set flashing planets fall out of their places.
Then the sun that erst o'er the elder world
With such brightness shone for the sons of men,
Black-dark now becomes, changed to bloody hue.
And the moon alike, who to man of old
Nightly gave her light, nither tumbles down :
And the stars also shower down from heaven,
Headlong through the roaring lift, lashed by all the winds.

Then Cynewulf, who, while he loved the soft aspects of Nature, loved even more the raging sea and hurricane, again describes, when he has placed Christ on the top of the hill of Zion, the howling winds, the dreadful din that weakens and wastes the world, but chiefly the ocean of fire and its overwhelming of the earth ; always however, in a manner which is his own, introducing his sorrow and pity for the fates of men. "Great and dire shall be the tribulations of the kin of Adam when that wan welter of fire, the swarthy flame—seizes on these three things—seas with

their fish, earth with her mountains, and the upper heaven magnificent with stars—"

972. So the greedy ghost shall gang searchingly through earth,
And the Flame, the ravager, with the Fire's terror
Shall the high up-timbered houses hurl upon the plain.
Lo! the fire-blast, flaming far, fierce and hungry as a sword,
Whelms the world withal! And the walls of burghs
In immediate ruin fall! Melt the mountains now,
Melt the cliffs precipitous, that of old against the Sea
Fixed against the floods, firm and steadfast standing,
Kept the earth apart;— bulwarks 'gainst the ocean billow
And the winding water. Then on every wight
Fastens the death-flame! On all fowls and beasts,
Fire-swart, a raging warrior, rushes Conflagration,
All the earth along.

Even the "white host of the archangels, bright as heaven," and now assembled round the sovereign God on Zion, trembles in that dreadful day. Much more the kin of Adam who now "rise quick and young again"; and in them as through a glass is clearly seen "the figure of their works, the memory of their words and the thoughts of their heart." This motive, with that of the terror and the fire, is now repeated in many different fashions, and as a kind of peroration to this part of the poem. It would be very tiresome reading were it not for the word-changes, and for a certain swirling of the verse which reveals the passionate feeling of the poet. We must remember, when we are weary of these repetitions, that what is written here was to be sung, not read.

Another theme is now taken up at line 1081—the theme of the Holy Rood. It is nobly conceived. The Cross, standing with its root on Zion's hill, rises till its top strikes the sky. All the assembled hosts look upon it. Nor is it difficult to see, for by its light all things are seen. The sun is gone; it shines instead of the sun; it is the brightest of all beacons. All shade is ban-

ished by its brilliancy. From head to foot it is red, wet with the blood of the King of heaven. Christ is seen by all the multitude of good and evil crucified upon it. The good see it, and it brings brightness to their souls. The evil see it for their torment and their teen.

This fine imagination is followed by an account of the Crucifixion, and by a description of the agony of the whole creation in sympathy with the death of Jesus. This is a motive which is again taken up by the writer of the *Dream of the Holy Rood.* It seems to run side by side with the weeping of all things for the death of Balder. Whether that idea was imported into the Norse mythology from Christian mythology, or whether it comes down to both from similar myths more ancient than either, does not engage us here. It appears slightly in Gregory's Homily, but our interest here is the deliberate and close way in which Cynewulf works up the thought, and his representation of Nature's sympathy with man. The earth and sky and trees and seas share in the passions of humanity. To the statement that the sun was obscured, Cynewulf adds, "darkened with misery." When he speaks of the earthquake, he says not only that the "earth shook," but also that it was "marred by fear." Nay, the whole Universe was, like a living Being, conscious of the death of Christ—

1143. And the broad-set sea
Made its might of power known, from its clasping marges broke
Up in ireful fury, o'er the breast of earth!
Yea, their shining stead within all the stars forsook
Each his own aspect! On that very tide
Wist the lucid Heaven who it was had made it
So upsoaring and so sheen, with its starry gems.

Hell, also, the guilt-avenging, knew that the Maker had come, and gave up her hosts from her hot

bosom. And the sea declared who had spread it forth, the trees told who had shaped them with their blossoming, when mighty God stepped up on one of them. Many a one was all o'er-run beneath its rind with bloody tears. Red and thick, their sap was turned to blood. Earth's dwellers cannot tell how many things inanimate yet felt within themselves the travail of the Lord.

The poem now turns to the division between the just and the unjust, and the three signs which mark the blessed, and the three others which indicate the cursed. Of these the only one worth dwelling on is the third sign of the blessed which might be due to the pen of Jonathan Edwards. "The happy band shall see the lost suffer sore pain amid the bale of darkness"—

1250. Flame that welters up and of worms the fierce aspect,
With their bitter-biting jaws— school[1] of burning creatures!
And from this a winsome joy waxes for the righteous.

There is not much of interest in the next portion of the poem, which is an enlargement of the reasons for the judgment of the good and evil given in chapter xxv. of St. Matthew's Gospel. The speech of Jesus to the good is short, but the speech to the evil is long and homiletic, and repeats, with the common aim of instruction, the whole story of the Fall, the Incarnation, the Crucifixion, and Resurrection. It is not devoid of nobleness, constantly changing too in metrical movement in accordance with the meaning, full of quick appeals, excessively personal (Jesus speaks as if he

[1] *Scole.* The Dutch speak of a *school* of fish. It is also a Lincolnshire word for a shoal of fish. It was, if I remember right, set apart by the Nantucket whalers to describe the herded households of the sperm-whale. I do not think that they employed it for any of the dwellers of the sea except the whale; and this usage of it for the great monsters when banded together may be as old as Cynewulf's time.

were speaking to one only among the vast host), well fitted then for use in a homily, a use to which I have no doubt it was put. Some passages in it must have been effective when sung in a kind of recitative. "I was born alone," one of these begins, and the lines run to a great length and must be thought of as sung with a rushing and impassioned speed

1421. All alone I was begotten
For the comfort of the folk; with their hands they folded me,
Wrapped me in a poor man's weeds and within the darkness wound me,
All bedight with dusky swathing. Lo, for all the world, I endurèd this.
Of a little worth, I seemed, to the sons of men. On the flinty stone I lay
Young, a child within his crib.

Nor, indeed, is the passage less effective when Christ, apparently turning to the gigantic rood, as a Catholic preacher to the crucifix, points to himself hanging there, and cries to all the vast host of the lost, "See now the deadly wounds which men erst made upon my palms, and also on my feet, by which I hung, fastened most bitterly! Here, too, mayst thou look on the wound blood-streaming, on my side. O how uneven there between us two the reckoning! . . . Why didst thou forsake the glorious life I bought for thee through love? Give me back thy life which I gave thee. I claim the life thou hast slain with sins. . . . Why hast thou crucified me worse upon the rood of thine hands than when of old I hung upon the tree?" The reasons of the sentence are now given which are written in the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew, and this passage ends—"Go now, accursed, cut off by your own will from angels' joy, into eternal fire, made ready, hot and grim, for Satan and his comrades, for all that dusky shoal. And the Ward

of Empire is mighty and enraged, ireful and terrorful; no foe upon this path of earth may then abide his presence. For he sweeps down with his right hand the sword of victory, and the devils fall headlong into the den profound, into the swarthy fire." The rest is homiletic exhortation and the final locking of hell; and, at the last, the opening of heaven to the hosts of the just. Cynewulf's description of the perfect land closes the poem—

1649. There is angels' song, there enjoyment of the blest,
There belovèd Presence of the Lord Eternal,
To the blessèd brighter than the beaming of the Sun!
There is love of the beloved, life without the end of death;
Merry there man's multitude; there unmarred is youth by eld;
Glory of the hosts of Heaven, health that knows not pain;
Rest for righteous doers, rest withouten strife,
For the good and blessed! Without gloom the day,
Bright and full of blossoming; bliss that's sorrowless;
Peace all friends between, ever without enmity;
Love that envieth not, in the union of the saints,
For the happy ones of Heaven! Hunger is not there nor thirst,
Sleep nor heavy sickness, nor the scorching of the Sun;
Neither cold nor care; but the happy company,
Sheenest of all hosts, shall enjoy for aye
Grace of God their King, glory with their Lord.

The last of the signed poems of Cynewulf is the *Elene*. It is in the Vercelli Book, and contains 1321 lines. Its source, as Kemble and Grimm first laid down, appears to be the Latin life of Quiriacus or Cyriacus, Bishop of Jerusalem, written in the *Acta Sanctorum* of the 4th of May; but reasons have been alleged for thinking that some other life was used by Cynewulf. Some have thought—and the view is based on the Greek title of the poem—that the Greek life of Cyriacus, which is of the 3rd of May, may have been brought to England and followed by Cynewulf, but the mere form of the name cannot prove this, and

Greek had decayed in England when Cynewulf was writing. Cyriacus is the Judas of the poem.

If Cynewulf used the life in the *Acta Sanctorum*, he used it with the freedom of a poet. He expands and contracts when he pleases, and he has interpolated two long inventions of his own. Professor Kent, in an excellent edition of the *Elene*,[1] has given the Latin text along with the Anglo-Saxon. Any one can now see without trouble where Cynewulf has followed, or not followed, his source; and the original matter in the poem seems worthy of the pains which Cynewulf says he bestowed on its composition. The subject is the *Finding of the True Cross*, and the action passes steadily on to this end. The Huns gather against Constantine as he lies asleep in camp, who dreams his famous dream of the Rood, and is bid to conquer by that sign. The battle follows, the victory, Constantine's study of the Scriptures, Helena's journey to Jerusalem, the council held by Helena with the Jews, the separate council of the Jews when Judas advises them not to reveal the place of the Cross, his imprisonment, his release, his prayer to Christ, his declaration of the death of Jesus for the redemption of the world, the finding of the Crosses, the discovery of the true Cross by a miracle, the devil's indignation and speech, the reply of Judas, the message of Helena to Constantine, the baptism of Judas as Cyriacus and his appointment to the Bishopric of Jerusalem, the finding of the nails, and the return of Helena. The last canto is Cynewulf's personal account of how he wrote the poem and of his state of mind.

Many have said that this is the finest of his poems,

[1] *Elene*, edited with introduction, Latin original, notes and glossary, by Charles Kent, Univ. of Tennessee. Ginn and Co., Boston and London.

but I cannot agree with them. Cynewulf was at his best when he had to invent, not to follow. When he works as he does here, on a given story, his imagination seems fettered. It is very different when, as in the *Christ*, he is building his lofty song out of his own heart. It is different, even in the *Elene*, when he wholly abandons his original, and invents the battle, the sea-voyage, and the personal epilogue. These are excellent, and it is their goodness, I think, which has made the critics place the whole poem on so high a level. I have already translated them all and need dwell on them no more. The rest of the poem is, I think, extremely dull.

In the battle and sea descriptions many heathen terms are used which enliven and strengthen the verse. Moreover, those swift, surprising, vivid phrases which mark a poet; that word-invention of which every poet is fond at one time or another of his life, and which, in the shape more of double-shotted substantives than of adjectives, the Anglo-Saxon poets of Northumbria were only too eager to use—appear frequently in the *Elene*. The metrical movement and swing of the lines are much more fixed and steady than in his other poems. There are very few verses which even tend towards the long line that belongs to the Caedmonian poems. On the contrary, that short epic line is used into which, after Ælfred, all English poetry seems to have drifted, as we see for example in the songs of the *Chronicle*. Rhyme and assonance are also not uncommon. All these characteristics point to a time when the art of poetry had consciously adopted rules, and when the metrical freedom of the poet began to be more rigidly limited. It does not, however, follow that because a poet like Cynewulf adopted the short

epic line in its strictness that he was precluded from using the long line of the Caedmonian poetry; and whether he did use it in any later poem than the *Elene* is a question that will meet us when we describe the *Dream of the Holy Rood*, which, though I believe it to be at least partly Cynewulf's, I leave to the following chapter because it is unsigned by him.[1]

[1] I have said no more, in this chapter on the signed poems of Cynewulf, of the *Fates of the Apostles*. It did not seem worth while to treat of it apart. But when these pages had gone to press Mr. Gollancz's book on the *Christ* appeared, and I have placed in a note at the end of this volume his new theory concerning the *Fates of the Apostles* and the *Andreas*.

CHAPTER XXV

UNSIGNED POEMS EITHER BY CYNEWULF OR BY MEN OF HIS SCHOOL

The poems which still remain for appreciation have all of them been attributed by divers critics to Cynewulf. No positive proof, however, can be given of his authorship of them. Five of them are important poems — the *Guthlac*, the *Descent into Hell*, the *Phœnix*, the *Dream of the Rood*, and the *Andreas*. The order in which I have here enumerated them is probably the chronological order of their composition, but no evidence really worth having can be given for this order. I may then classify them as I please, and I take first the *Guthlac* and the *Andreas*, both of which are saint-legends, then the *Descent into Hell*, then the *Phœnix*, and lastly, the *Dream of the Rood*, because, as I have said, it closes in my opinion the life and work of Cynewulf.

The *Guthlac* is the story of that anchorite on whose island refuge in the fens the Abbey of Crowland was built. The poem is in the Exeter Book, and its conclusion is missing. There is scarcely any critic of importance who does not say that Cynewulf had a hand in it, and the second part at least is almost unanimously allotted to him. It is more than probable

that we should find in its lost ending, had we but the luck to discover it, Cynewulf's signature in runes. The poem has been divided into two parts, and then into three, by various writers. Many attribute only the second part to Cynewulf; and those who think that he wrote the whole, think also, for the most part, that there was a long interval between the composition of the first and second portions,[1] between *Guthlac A* and *Guthlac B*. The style and poetic power of the first are very inferior to the second. Moreover, the first part differs considerably from the *Life of Guthlac* by Felix, who may have been a monk of Crowland, while the second part follows that life closely.[2] On the whole, then, it is most probable that Cynewulf, at the beginning of his Christian life, while his imagination was yet hampered by his natural avoidance of all profane poetry, wrote the first part of *Guthlac* from oral tradition, and then, much later in life, when his imagination was delivered by the peace in his soul, took up his old work again, after the production of the *Life of Guthlac*, and added to it an end, with a special account of the anchorite's death. The free and noble manner of this part is a great contrast to the barren and limping movement of the first part. Could we but be certain that Cynewulf wrote both parts at different times, the comparison of the poet in the one to the poet in the other would be a fascinating bit of criticism.

One thing remains to be said. Mr. Gollancz tells

[1] Rieger divides it into two, written at different times by Cynewulf. Charitius adopts the division, but only the second part is Cynewulf's. Lefevre divides it into three parts, with a long interval between the second and third parts. Dietrich and Morley say it is one poem by one hand. Wülker thinks that the second part is Cynewulf's and his earliest work! These differing doctors show at least that no clear conclusion has been arrived at.

[2] If so, this partly dates the poem, for that life was written between 747 and 749.

me he has transferred to the beginning of *Guthlac* (which follows the *Christ* in the Exeter manuscript) a number of lines which have been usually printed at the end of the *Christ*. These form, he says, the true introduction to *Guthlac*, and he supports his opinion by the fact that there is a blank space in the manuscript before these lines begin. The *Christ* certainly ends better where he makes it now end, at line 1663. It is not so clear that the *Guthlac* begins better where he makes it begin—*Se bið gefeana faegrast*. It is a better beginning, as a matter of form, but the difficulty lies in this, that the quality of this new introduction, as poetry, is of a much higher value than the rest of the first part of the poem. It is, in fact, of the same poetic value as the *Christ* itself, with which it has been so long connected, or as the second part of *Guthlac*. It is not possible, I think, to hold that this introduction could have been written by the poet of *Guthlac A* at the time when *A* was written. It is not only a difference in artistic work which divides them, but it is a difference in thoughtfulness, in experience of life, such as, to compare small things with great, divides the outlook over life taken by Milton in the *Samson Agonistes* from that taken in the *Comus*. It is more than probable that Mr. Gollancz is right in tagging on these twenty-nine lines to the *Guthlac*, but I think he will have to say that they were placed there many years after the first part was written, when *Guthlac B* was added—about the time, that is, when Cynewulf wrote the *Christ*. Indeed, I think that the whole preface has been remodelled if not entirely written at this time. It is done with something of an artist's hand. The picture with which it begins is tenderly conceived, and tenderness is one of the qualities of Cynewulf's

genius. The mournful note in it, the patriot's sorrow, belongs also to Cynewulf, and has some historical interest if we identify his life with the evil days of Northumbria. There is also a contemplative element in it as of one who had retired from the stormy world and was inclined, in the conventionality of conversion, to classify the different kinds of saints. In such a classification he easily slips into his subject. The life of Guthlac belonged to the highest class. He is one of the anchorites whom Northumbria's old traditions, derived from the Celtic monks, considered to live nearest to God. "Fairest of joys it is," so the poem begins, when at first they meet—the angel and the "happy soul who has forsaken the frail delights of earth." And sweet and tender is the greeting that the angel gives—

> Now mayst fare thy way whither fondly thou didst yearn
> O so long, and often times! It is I shall lead thee;—
> Pleasant are the paths for thee, and displayed for thee
> Glory's gleaming light. Way-goer art thou now
> To that holy home, harbour from afflictions,
> Whither sorrow comes no more. *Chr.* 1671 (*Guth.* 6).

From this, the introduction passes on through the classification I have mentioned to those chosen champions of God who dwell in wildernesses; and glides at once into the life of Guthlac in lines which seem to confirm the inference that this first part of the poem followed an oral tradition rather than the book of Felix. "Now we may declare what men of holy estate made known to us, how Guthlac directed his mind to the will of God."

The first part has but little poetic power of any kind, and the few lines in it which describe the hermit's life with nature have been already quoted. The second part reveals at once a more experienced and more

imaginative hand. It takes up, after an homiletic account of the Fall, the story of the death of Guthlac, and his death is told in heroic terms. It is the last fight of a Christian warrior. His death-song is sung; he is received into the Burg of triumph. The scenery is well set and the Sun plays his part in the battle. Night too appears with her shadow-helm to darken the battle-field. Night follows after night, each striding like a phantom over the sky. The Fiend and Guthlac meet one another like two heroes, armed for battle. Guthlac stands alone. Satan comes on him with many troops—"smiths of sin; roaring and raging, like wild beasts"; but the hill where this Holm-gang is set is Guthlac's field of victory. "His heart, his bones, were tortured," but his soul, full of joy, was ready for the Forth-going. The praise of God burnt in his breast; fiery hot was love in his heart, as the days stepped on and the cloud-helmings of the nights." When sickness came heavier on him, "the deadly drink that Eve had poured for Adam," death entered the lists—the warrior greedy of corpses; the stealthy bowman drew near to Guthlac in the shadow of the night. But he was not alone. His disciple asked him, "How is thine heart, my lord and father, shelter of thy friends, so sore oppressed! Knowst thou how this sickness will have an end?" "Death is near," answers Guthlac,—"the warrior who is not weary in the fight. Long do I tarry here"—and the whole passage is replete with the anchorite's tenderness and rapture. "Then the heavens grew dim over the children of men, dark strode the roll of nights above the clouds," and the day dawned on which Christ arose. Death was closer now; "stark, with thievish steps, he sought the house of the soul. Hot and near to Guthlac's

heart the whirring arrow-storm, with showers of war, drove into his body. The cunning keys unlocked the treasure of his life." Then Guthlac gives his last message to his sister, and all the lines are steeped in that pathetic humanity which belongs in its fulness only to Cynewulf among Anglo-Saxon poets. I would the passage were not too long to translate.

After this he reveals to his disciple the secret of his converse with an angel who visits him between "the rushing of the dawn and the darkening of the night." "My soul," cries Guthlac, "is struggling forth to reach true joy." Then sank his head, but still, "high-minded, he drew his breath," and it was fragrant "as the blowing herbs in summer time, which—each in its own stead—winsome o'er the meadows, dropping honey, sweetly smell." With this lovely verse the poet, thrilled by the note that he has struck, is so uplifted that the impulse bears him onwards for a long time in a fuller flight, and the next sixty lines are some of the finest and the most sustained in the whole of Anglo-Saxon poetry. The sunset, the darkening of the night, the upleaping over the body of the saint of the heavenly pillar of light by which the shadows of the darkness are quenched, the dawn, the death, the rapturous welcome of the saint in heaven, the voyage of the ship over the sea—are all touched with true fire, and burn with a steady light. They are, just because they are good, difficult to translate, but here they are—

1252. When the glorious gleam
Sought its setting-path, swart the North-sky grew,
Wan below the welkin ; veiled the world with mist,
Thatched it thick with gloom ! Over-thronged [1] the night,
Shrouded the land's lovelinesses ! Then of Lights the greatest,

[1] Night urged its way over the sky.

Holy, from the Heavens, came, shining high, serenely,
Bright above the burg-halls.[1]
He abode his end-day;
Blessed in his boldness, as it should befit him;
Stricken down by death-darts.
And the dazzling of that glory,
Noble round the noble one, all the night livelong,
Shone, bedecked with sheen; and the shadows dwindled,
Loosed and lost[2] below the Lift. Thus that Light illuming,
Shone, around the sacred house— candle of the sky it was—
From the Even-gloaming, till from Eastward came,
O'er the path profound, soft the murmur of the dawn:
Weather-token warm!
Then arose the glorious man,
Blessed, mindful to be brave! To his ministering thegn,
To his true companion spoke he, "Time is, that thou farest
And dost all-bethink thee of my errand now.
And with speed dost bring it, as I erst did bid thee,
Straight to my dear Sister; for my spirit now
Swiftly from my body hastens, sighing for the joys of God."
Then he heaved his hands on high, with the Housel fed,
Meekly with the food majestic; and his eyes he opened,
Holy jewels of his head; to the Heavenly kingdom gazed,
Glad of heart for graces, and his ghost sent forth,
Beautiful with blessed deeds, to the bliss of glory.
Then was led along Guthlac's soul on high
On the up-way! Angels bore it on
To that long delight; but his lych[3] grew cold
Soul-less under skies.
Then out-streamed a Light,
Brightest that of beaming pillars! All that Beacon fair,
All that heavenly glow round the holy home,
Was up-reared on high, even to the roof of Heaven,
From the field of earth, like a fiery tower,
Seen beneath the sky's expanse, sheenier than the sun,
Glory of the glorious stars! Hosts of angels sang
Loud the lay of Victory! In the lift the ringing sound
Now was heard the heaven under, rapture of the Holy Ones!
So the blessèd Burgstead was with blisses filled,
With the sweetest scents, and with skiey wonders,
With the angels' singing, to its innermost recesses;
Heirship of the Holy One![4]

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[1] This is the Pillar of Light afterwards more fully described.

[2] *To-lysan* = to dissolve. "Loosed and lost" expresses the process as well as the end of the dissolution, and this is the full meaning, I think, of the word.

[3] As the word *lich* for corpse is used in *Piers Plowman*, and in our *lych-gate*, I use it here for alliteration's sake.

[4] That is, heaven, the *yrfestôl*, the hereditary seat of the saints, therefore of this saint.

More onelike it was,
And more winsome there, than in world of ours
Any speech may say; how the sound and odour,
How the clang celestial, and the saintly song
Heard in Heaven were— high-triumphant praise of God,
Rapture following rapture.[1]
All our island trembled,
All its Field-floor shook.

The messenger shook also with fear, drew forth his ship, and hastened to the sea-voyage I have already translated.[2] I think Cynewulf wrote these, and in the zenith of his power. The sorrow-laden disciple gives his message to Guthlac's sister, and while he is yet speaking, the poem breaks off suddenly, unfinished. Had we the rest of it, we should probably, as I have said, have some personal conclusion, in which Cynewulf would record his name in his usual runic fashion, and tell the tale of his state of mind. But for this we must wait in hope of some fresh manuscript, and meanwhile visit the *Andreas*.

The *Andreas* is in the Vercelli Book and extends to 1722 lines. Grimm was inclined to say that Ealdhelm was its writer. A number of critics following Dietrich attribute it to Cynewulf. Fritzsche's work upon it, while allotting it to an imitator of Cynewulf, has made it improbable that he was the writer, and this is now a common opinion. The poem certainly does not possess the special sentiment of Cynewulf, nor his habit of accumulating repetitions of the same thought in many different forms, nor his slow-moving manner broken by rushes of impulsive song, nor his satisfaction with a few incidents on which to work, and his apparent dislike to vary them. The *Andreas* is full of changing incidents, its movement is swift and

[1] "Breahtem aefter breahtme."

[2] Vol. i. 242.

following, its picture is filled with many images, and the writer does not repeat as much as usual in Anglo-Saxon poetry. There are no rapturous outbursts, and no personal joy or sorrow, one or other of which we look to find in a poem by Cynewulf. Nevertheless there are many phrases which put us in mind of Cynewulf, but then there are many which put us in mind of *Beowulf*. The writer was probably, then, a follower of Cynewulf, some contemporary poet who had read the *Beowulf* and loved the early word-usages of his people. I think he lived, like Cynewulf, on the sea-coast, or perhaps, as a sailor, knew it well. His sea-voyage, in many curious phrases, suggests that he had been a sailor. There is even a personal touch, as I believe, in one passage, which speaks of his having been sixteen times on sea-journeys.[1]

The poem is full of original touches, and of curious interest. I have not read the *Acts of Andrew and Matthew*, Greek MSS. which are the sole source of the legend,[2] and do not know to what extent the poet used his original; but he probably worked with the usual freedom of the English poets, and the English note and air are fuller in the *Andreas* than in the *Elene* or the *Juliana*. It may be that this distinctive voice in the verse arose from the poet having only heard the story told to him by some monk who was still acquainted with Greek. He had nothing before his eyes to follow; he had only his memory to guide him. Hence his freedom!

The poem begins in the heroic strain, transferred

[1] Mr. Gollancz restores the *Andreas* to Cynewulf. See the note at the end of this volume.

[2] They were discovered in the Royal Library at Paris, and in two of them the main details of the poem are found. There was probably a Latin translation of the legend in England.

to a Christian subject, "Lo, from days of yore we have heard of twelve heroes, famous under the stars, thegns of the Lord. The glory of their warfare failed not when the helms crashed in fight. Far-famed folk-leaders were they, bold on the war-path, when shield and hand guarded the helm upon the battle-field." In this easy fashion the story is brought on of Matthew, one of these heroes, waiting in prison to be devoured by the man-eating Mermedonians. His seizure is told in the strains of heathen war, with a full use of old heathen phrases. Matthew cries to God out of the prison, and God descends and departs home again, like a pagan Deity, but tells his servant that Andrew will come to deliver him. We now await the real hero of the piece. The first morning dawns. "The night-helm glode off, swiftly it vanished. Behind it came the light, the trumpet sound of the dawn." And the Mermedonians, wolves of slaughter, raged for the flesh of Matthew, but had three days yet to wait. It was then that the Lord appeared to Andrew, while he dwelt in Achaia, in a dream, and bade him go to Mermedonia. "There languishes thy brother in victory. Go and deliver him."—"How can I, Lord," said Andrew, "make my voyage so swiftly over the paths of the deep? One of thine angels from the high Heaven might more easily do this. He knows the going of the seas, the salt streams, and the road of the swan; the onset of the billows, and the Water-Terror, but not I. The earls of Elsewhere are unknown to me, and the highways over the cold water."

"Alas, Andrew!" answered the Lord, "that thou should'st be so slow of heart to fare upon this way. Nathless, thou must go where the onset of war, through the heathen battle-roar and the war-craft of

heroes, is boded for thee. At early dawn, at the marge of the sea, thou shalt step on a keel, and across the cold water break o'er the bathway. No skulker in battle was Andrew, but hard and high-hearted, and eager for war. Wherefore at opening day he went over the sand-links and to the sea-stead, his thegns with him, trampling over the shingle. The ocean thundered, the billows beat the shore, the resplendent morning came, brightest of beacons, hastening over the deep sea, holy, out of the darkness. Heaven's candle shone upon the floods of sea."

This is all in the heroic manner, and more so than in any other Anglo-Saxon poem. Moreover, it is filled with the sea-air and the morning breaking on the deep. The very verse has the dash and salt of the waves in it, and the scenery is Northumbrian. No one can mistake it for that of an East Anglian or a Wessex shore.

Then, as Andrew stood on the beach, he was aware of three shipmasters sitting in a sea-boat, as they had just come over the sea, and these were Almighty God, with his angels twain, "clothed like ship-farers, when on the breast of the flood, they dance with their keels, far off upon the water cold."

"Whence come ye," said Andrew, "sailing in keels, sea-crafty men, in your water-rusher, lonely floaters o'er the wave? Whence has the ocean stream brought you over the tumbling of the billows?"

"We from Mermedonia are," replied Almighty God. "Our high-stemmed boat, our snell sea-horse, enwreathed with speed, bore us with the tide along the way of the whale, until we sought this people's land; much grieved by the sea, so sorely were we driven of the wind."

"Bring me there," said Andrew; "little gold can I give, but God will grant you meed."—"Strangers go not there," answered the Lord, standing in the ship; "dost thou wish to lose thy life?"—"Desire impels me," said Andrew, and he is answered from the bow of the boat by God who is, like a sailor of to-day, "sitting on the bulwark above the incoming whirl of the wave,"—and the extreme naïveté of the demand for payment, and the bargaining on the part of God, belong to the freshness of the morning of poetry; while the whole conversation supplies us with a clear picture of the manners and talk of travellers and seamen. We stand among the merchant carriers of the eighth century in England.

"Gladly and freely," the shipman says, "we will ferry thee over the fishes' bath when you have first paid your journey's fare, the scats appointed, so will the shipwards take you willingly on board." Then answered Andrew, sore in need of friends: "I have no beaten gold, nor silver store, nor lands, nor rings, to whet hereto your will." "How then," said the king, "would'st thou seek the sea-hills and the margin of the deep, over the chilly cliffs, to find a ship? Thou hast nothing for comfort on the street of sea; hard is his way of life and work who long makes trial of the paths of sea."[1] "It does not become thee," Andrew replies, "since the Lord has given thee wealth and good luck in the world to answer with biting speech and over-haughtiness. 'Tis better when a man modestly and couthly speaks to him who hastens to a far land. So Christ commanded—his thegns are we—chosen for his war-

[1] Cf. *Seafarer*.

riors. He bid us go over the bottomless abyss to woo souls to him, as far as the water bends around the world, or the hamlet-covered plains lie either side the streets of sea. He bid us take no treasure for the journey. Now mayst thou think how stands our voyage in thine eyes; soon shall I test what thou meanest for our consolation." "Yes," answers God, "if you are his thegns, I will take you." Then they stepped up on the keel, and over the swinging of the waves Andrew sat by the ocean-ward, Ætheling by Ætheling. "Never heard I," cries the poet, "that men, glorious kings and lovely thegns, sat in a comelier ship than that, laden with high treasures." And then the mighty king bade his angel comfort the poor men with food, that they might better bear their way over the welter of the flood, over the thronging of the billows, because now the whale-mere was vexed and mightily disturbed.

The storm is now described in words that come, one after another, short, heavy, and springing, like the blows of the waves, and the gusts of wind. We know as we read that the writer had seen the thing. I have translated it before; I have need to translate it here again; but, for the sake of variety, I put it into blank verse, and literally—

370. The sword-fish played,
Through Ocean gliding, and the gray gull wheeled
Greedy of prey; dark grew the Weather-torch;
The winds waxed great, together crushed the waves,
The stream of ocean stirred, and drenched with spray
The cordage groaned; then Water-Terror rose
With all the might of armies from the deep.

And the thegns of Andrew were much afraid. But when the steersman offered to put them ashore, they refused, as in *Beowulf*, as in the *Fight at Maldon*, to

leave their lord. "Whither can we go," they cry, "if we should leave our lord? In every land we should then be shamed before all folk, when the sons of men, for courage known, sit to choose who best of them has stood by his lord in war, when hand and shield upon the battle-plain, hewed down by grinding swords, bear sharp straits in the play of foes." Andrew, as chieftain, has also his duties to his comrades. The steersman bids him cheer and stir them with words; and he does this by telling them the story of Christ calming the sea of Galilee. It is a happy situation which the poet conceives, for Andrew, not knowing that Christ himself is seated beside him in the stern, tells Christ a story of Christ. "This Water-Terror shall be chid to stillness by the Lord of power—"[1]

438. So happened it of yore, when we in ship
Steered for the sea-fords o'er the foaming bar,
Riding the waves; and the dread water-roads
Seemed full of danger, while the ocean-streams
Beat on the bulwarks; and the seas cried out,
Answering each other; and at whiles uprose
Grim Terror from the foaming breast of sea,
Over our wave-ship, into its deep lap.
And then the crowd
'Gan wail within the keel, and lo, the king,
The Glory-giver of the angels, rose
And stilled the billows and the weltering waves,
Rebuked the winds! Then sank the seas, and smooth
The might of waters lay. Our soul laughed out,
When we had seen beneath the welkin's path
The winds and waves and water-dread become
Fearful themselves for fear of God the Lord.
Wherefore in very sooth I tell you now
The living God will never leave unhelped
An earl on earth if courage fail him not.

Now sleep invades the thegns and the sea grew

[1] Whenever I translate in blank verse I have done the passage elsewhere more literally, and in a measure nearer to the Anglo-Saxon rhythm, of which blank verse is no representative.

calm. But Andrew and the steersman, still awake, renew their talk. It is much more full of change and reality than is usual in Anglo-Saxon dialogue, and the characters of the speakers are also clearly distinguished. Christ and Andrew are seated together, but Andrew does not recognise his master, and when he is urged to tell what he remembers of Jesus, it is to Jesus himself that he tells all. This I have said is a good dramatic situation, and it is bettered by the vivid way in which the poet keeps the boat and the sea before our eyes. Touch after touch makes us aware that we are flying along the sea to deliver St. Matthew. Andrew's curiosity is awakened first by the skill of the steersman.

"A better seafarer I never met," he says. "Teach me the art whereby thou steerest the swimming of this horse of the sea, this wave-floater, foamed over by ocean. It was my hap to have been time after time on a sea-boat, sixteen times, pushing the deep, the streamings of Eagor, while froze my hands, and once more is this time—yet never have I seen a hero who like thee could steer o'er the stem. The sea-welter lingers on our sides, the foaming wave strikes the bulwark, the bark is at full speed. Foam-throated it fares; most like to a bird it glides o'er the ocean. More skilful art in any mariner I've never seen. It is as if the ship were standing still on a landstead where nor storm nor wind could move it, nor the water-floods shatter its foaming prow; but over seas it sweeps along, swift under sail. Yet thou art young, O refuge of warriors, not in winters old, and hast the answer of a sea-playing earl: and a wise wit as well."

"Oft it befalleth," answers Almighty God, "that we on ocean's path break o'er the bathway with our

ocean-stallions; and whiles it happeneth wretchedly to us on the sea, but God's will is more than the flood's rage, and it is plain thou art his man, for the deep sea straightway knew and ocean's round, that thou hadst grace of the Holy Ghost. The surging waves went back, a fear stilled the deep-bosomed wave."

Andrew, hearing this, bursts into a song of praise and joy with which this part of the poem closes, for now the steersman changes the conversation; he asks Andrew to recall his life in Palestine with Jesus, —the same curious situation of Christ asking about himself is kept up,—and in these questions the teaching element in the Anglo-Saxon poems enters in. Poems were used as sermons, just as some homilies were written in rude verse. With this purpose the poet makes Andrew give a brief account of the chief miracles, and ends with a touch of personal recollection and love, which lifts the passage into art. "Now hearest thou, young hero, how the Lord of Glory loved us in life, and by his teaching drew us to fair joys." Further questions follow, and the last seems to Andrew to go so much to the heart of the matter that he is amazed. "What dost thou ask," he cries, "with wonderful words and seemest to know every hap by the sharpness of thy spirit."—"Out of no lying craft or entrapping words," answers the steersman, "do I ask thee this—here on the path of the whale[1] —but because my heart is full of joy. Tell me more of the divine child." And Andrew is swept away by the passion of the steersman, and will tell him all he has known. In this way, and the whole dialogue is written by an artist, the strange legend is introduced

[1] This, and many other little touches keep our eyes fixed on the presence of the sea.

of the stone images of the Cherubim[1] in the Temple being quickened by Christ, stepping down from their place and bearing witness to Jesus before the elders; and then being sent over the green plains of Judæa to call Abraham and Isaac and Jacob from their graves, to bid them be young again and to come to Jerusalem to bear witness to Christ. Thus all day long Andrew spoke in many tales till suddenly sleep overtook him. And Christ bade his angels bear this loved and sea-wearied one to land, where they leave him and his comrades sleeping on the highway, near the city of the Mermedonians.

And now begins what I may call the glory of St. Andrew, in which the half-epic battle of the "hero hard in war"—his purification through long martyrdom—is accomplished. It consists of four parts—the introduction, the delivery of St. Matthew, the martyrdom of Andrew, and the final triumph of the saint in the conversion of the Mermedonians.

The introduction paints the Apostle waking in the morning. He slept

835. Until the Lord had bid in brightness shine
Day's candle, and the shadows swooned away,
Wan under clouds; then came the Torch of air,
And Heaven's clear radiance blickered o'er the halls.
Then woke the hard in war, and saw wide plains
Before the burg-gates, and precipitous hills,
And, round the gray rock and the ledges steep,
Tile-glittering houses, towers standing high,
And wind-swept walls.

Then Andrew awakened his comrades. "'Twas Christ the Ætheling," he says, "that led us across the realm of the oar."—"We too," they answer, "have had our adventure;" and this poet, who has a

[1] I do not know whence this legend is derived.

special turn for various incident invents for them a dream in which they are brought into the heavenly Paradise—

> 862. "Us weary with the sea sleep overtook!
> Then came great earns above the yeasty waves,
> Swift in their flight and prideful of their plumes;
> Who from us sleeping took away our souls,
> And bore them blithely through the lift in flight,
> With joyful clamour. Bright and gentle they
> Caressed our souls with kindness, and they dwelt
> In glory where eternal song was sweet,
> And wheeled the firmament."

And there they saw the thegns of God, the patriarchs and martyrs and prophets, and the apostles and archangels praising the Lord. And Andrew gives thanks to Christ who now in form of a young Ætheling draws near. "Hail to thee, Andrew!" he cries, "the grim snare-smiths shall not o'erwhelm thy soul."

"How could I not know thee on the journey?" Andrew answers. "That was a sin."

"Not so great," replies Christ, "as when in Achaia thou saidst thou could not go over the battling of the waves. But now arise, set Matthew free. Bear many pains, for war is destined to thee. Let no grim spear-battle make thee turn from me. Be ever eager of glory. Remember what pains I bore when the rood was upreared. Then shalt thou turn many in this burgh to the light of Heaven."

Andrew, then—and here begins the Delivery of St. Matthew—enters invisibly the town, like a chieftain going to the field of war. Seven watchmen keep the dungeon. As the saint drew near death swept them all away; hapless they died; the storm of death, beflecked with blood, seized on these warriors. The door fell in, and Andrew, the beast of battle,

pressed in over the heathen who lay drunken with blood, ensanguining the death-plain. In that murder-coffer, under the locks of gloom, he found Matthew, the high-souled hero, singing the praises of God. They kissed and clipped each other. Holy and bright as heaven a light shone round about them, and their hearts welled with joys.

Now when Andrew had delivered Matthew, he went to the city and sat him down by a pillar of brass on the march-path, full of pure love and thoughts of bliss eternal, and waited what should happen. And here begins the story of his suffering. The folk-moot is held, and the people demand the prisoners for meat. But the fierce bearers of the ashen-spears find the keepers dead, and the hammer-work unlocked. Fear of Hunger, that pale table-ghost, falls upon them, and the story of this cannibal crowd in an agony of famine is told with a grim humour which is very rare in Anglo-Saxon poetry. The first question is, Should they eat the dead guards of the prison? Then the burghers are called to council, and they come to the Thing-stead riding on their horses and haughty with their ash-shafts, and cast lots whom they shall devour. And the lot falls on an old redesman, who redeems his own life by offering his young son. Is it a touch of savage humour that they thankfully accept the change? And the youth sang his Harm-song, but no compassion held from him the "edge of the sword, hardened in the rain of blows, many coloured with fire-splotches." But Andrew has pity on the youth, and the edge of the sword becomes as wax and melts away. A rude, mocking description follows of the state of the town. "Howling of woe arose, the host burst into cries, the heralds shouted through

the streets for famine. The hornèd halls, the wine-houses were empty, men enjoyed no welfare in that bitter tide; the wisest thinkers met to take rede of their wretchedness in secret runing; and one warrior said to another, "Let no one who has good lore hide it, for an immeasurable plague is on us." Whereat a devil steps up before the chiefs; wan and colourless he was and his hue that of a cursed one. "It is Andrew," he says, "a stranger Ætheling, who has done you this wrong. There he stands." Andrew replies with the usual vigour of the saints; and a curious passage follows in which the whole host, under its ensigns, with spears and shields, rushes to the gates to attack a single man. The scene is absurd, but after all it is the poet's way of heightening the aspect of the hero. To do this still more, God intervenes: "Andrew, thou shalt do a deed of valour; strengthen thy heart against the strong. Torments and cold bonds await thee, but I abide with thee." The saint is bound and dragged through mountain gorges and over stony hills, and over the streets, the ancient work of giants, paved with parti-coloured stones. So the whole day long was this sun-bright hero swinged, till the sun that blazed in the firmament sank to its seats of rest. Light was his thought and his courage unbroken.

Here follows an heroic picture in which the saint is set in a frame made by the description of a bitter night of frost. This also is done to enhance him in our eyes. Nature is used to heighten the lonely figure of the martyr—

1255. Then was the Holy One, the stark-souled Earl,[1]
Beset with wisdom's thoughts the whole night long,
Under the dungeon gloom.

[1] This also I have translated before, and I put it, therefore, into blank verse.

> Snow bound the earth
> With whirling flakes of winter, and the storms
> With hard hail-showers grew chill, and Frost and Rime—
> Gray gangers of the heath—locked closely up
> The homes of heroes and the peoples' seats!
> Frozen the lands; and by keen icicles
> The water's might was shrunken on the streams
> Of every river, and the ice bridged o'er
> The glittering Road of the sea.

Fresh torment filled the next day, and in answer to Andrew's piteous prayer for help, only the Fiend appears, the fierce warlock who cries to the torturers, "Smite the sinner over his mouth, the foe of the folk. Now he speaketh too much." And the martyrdom goes on till "the Sun gliding to his tent, went under a headland of clouds, and Night, wan and brown, drew down her helm o'er earth and veiled the mountains steep."

Then in the prison there was a wild scene. The murderous Lord of ill, with seven devils, came mocking, "What thinkest thou, Andrew, of thy hither-coming?" And he urged on his thegns, "Let the spear-point, the arrow poison-dipped, dive into the heart of this doomed man; run boldly in and bow the pride of this lord of battle." The rush of the devils is stopped by the Cross; and the great captive of hell is grieved. "What has befallen you, my warriors bold, my shield-companions, that so little is your luck?" Then one answered him, "Nought can we pain him. Go forward thyself. A bad, a frightful fight wilt thou have, if thou darest venture thy life against this lonely man. Dearest of Earls, we may give thee a better rede; take care how it may go with thee in the changing of blows. Better to twit him in his wretchedness; we have the words all ready." Then, at a distance, the devil mocked the saint, but the answer drove him to flight.

The third day dawned, another day of torment; and at its end, while he lay weary of his life upon the plain, he cried piteously to Christ, "Thou, on the Cross, didst call, 'Father, Prince of life, why hast thou forsaken me'; and I, tormented for three days, now cry, 'Joy-giver of souls, let me yield up my life.' Moreover, thou didst promise that not a hair of our heads should be lost, nor sinew or bone lie on swathe; and now my locks lie driven through the land, my sinews are cramped, my blood is spilled—death is dearer than this life-care."—"Weep not," answers Christ, "thy wretchedness. This is not too hard for thee. Nothing of my word shall fail. Look on thy track where thy blood has gushed out." And the champion looked back, and lo, he saw blowing bowers rise, laden with blossoms, where he had poured out his blood! The fourth night now comes, and Christ is still present with his servant. The trial is closed, the triumph has begun. "No longer," Jesus cries, "shalt thou suffer sorrow." Then rose the hero, nor was his beauty now spoiled, nor a fringe of his garment unravelled, nor a hair of his head loosened. He was whole as before.

The fourth division, which tells of the glory of the saint, begins with a few personal remarks about the poet's treatment of his subject. The only thing in it which reveals character is a certain touch of proud humility, mingled with the self-consciousness of an artist. "I have already told of the saint's deeds, but far beyond my powers goes on the well-known history: a man of fuller insight than I may tell it all; yet I may give a few more words of the song." This is nothing more than an introduction to the new canto. There is none of that sentimental personality in it which,

had Cynewulf written the poem, he would have certainly introduced, once he had begun, as the poet does here, to speak of himself. I cannot fancy the writer of the individual passages in the *Christ*, the *Elene*, and the *Juliana* holding his tongue under these circumstances. But it is just about as much personality as an imitator of Cynewulf would be likely to practise.

We find Andrew now, to return to the poem, on the plain near the city wall where two huge upright stones stand beaten by the storms, and these are the two tables of the Law. To one of them he speaks, and bids it let bubble forth from its base overflowing, wide-sweeping waters, a weltering ocean, for the death of these wicked men. The Stone behaved well; there was no delay; it opened, and a torrent flooded the plain. And the poet seizes his opportunity. A great flood, slaughtering men, is what an Englishman loved to describe. He does it well, but some of his metaphors are too fantastic for good art. I do not think that Cynewulf would have used them, but I give them in a note[1] just because, from a literary point of view, they point to a poet who had left the quietude of Cynewulf behind, and was striving after odd and strange effects. The power shown is vigorous, but it is strained, and we may make the same criticism concerning the whole of this interesting and attractive poem. The constant use of phrases borrowed from *Beowulf*, from Cynewulf himself, the effort to be specially heroic in description,

[1] The Stone "splits and the foaming billows cover the land, *as when the mead is spilled after a feast.* The fated sank in the deep; the war-charging of the waters swept them away. *This was a bitter beer-feast. No delay made the cup-bearers, the attendant thegns. From break of day there was drink enough prepared for every one of them.*" The whole of this comparison of the Flood to a drinking feast is detestable. Fortunately it stands alone. But it reveals the sensationalist who is searching for violent effects.

to import more of the heathen elements of Saga into a Christian song than even the *Elene* dared to do—the use of strange words, even the elaborate invention of words—point to a poet who was departing from a temperate style, and suggest, if they do not prove, that he wrote at a time when Cynewulf was growing old. If this be true, it puts us again in mind of the fantastic poets who imitated and followed the true Elizabethans, who retained much of the strength and imagination of the great time, but who chose to develop the artificial rather than the natural elements in the work of their predecessors. Yet the writer of the *Andreas* has one power Cynewulf had not, inventiveness in incident; and it was a thing sorely wanted in Anglo-Saxon poetry. Moreover, the fault I find with him had, I may say, only begun. It is not carried far, and had we more work from his hand, he would perhaps have purged himself from it when he had grown older. The fault is a fault of youth as well as of age. It belonged to Coleridge, to Byron, to Browning, to Tennyson, when they were young.

And now air and earth and fire join in the wrath which falls on the folk and the town. The yellow waters waxed more and more and men fled to the caves, but a mighty angel there forstood them, and sprinkled gleaming fire over the burg. The beating sea and torrents roared, the fire-flakes flew, the flood boiled with waves, and in the houses rose the lay of sorrow; many a death-song was sung. Through the tremulous air the roarings of the flame flung themselves upon the walls, and still the waters greater grew. And one cried out, "'Tis our unrightness to the stranger that brings this doom. Let us set him free." And Andrew knew the mind of the folk was

changed; wherefore he bade the stream-faring be still, and the storms rest about the stony hills. The earth dries under his feet. Then a fearful cavern is cleft in the hill and the fallow flood is engulfed, yet not the waters alone, but fourteen eminent villains therewith. This settled the strife, and all cry out "Hear Andrew, he is a messenger of the true God." So the apostle prayed, and all the young folk who had been drowned arose alive. They were baptized, and a church was built on the spot. The nobles and their wives were then christened, and a bishop chosen, Plato by name.

"Now I am going," cries Andrew, "to find a ship." So great is their sorrow that God speaks again to his servant. "Stay yet seven days in this city, Refuge of warriors"—even God takes the heroic note—"confirm them in the faith and then depart." So he did, and the poem ends with the picture of the departure, such as the poet might have drawn after reading Baeda's description of the departure of Ceolfrid from the shores of Tyne—

1712. Then by the Nesses of the sea they brought
The eager warrior to his wave-wood home,
And weeping after him, stood on the beach
As long as they could see that Æthelings' joy
Sail o'er the seals'-path, on the tumbling waves.
Then they gave glory to the glorious Lord,
Sang in their hosts, and this it was they sang—
"One only is the eternal God! Of all
Created beings is his might and power
Lauded aloud; and, over all, his Joy—
In high and holy splendour of the Heavens—
Shines through the everlasting ages far;
In glory beautiful for evermore
With angel hosts—our Ætheling, our King."[1]

[1] I have put this last passage also into blank verse, though I have not translated it before, for it may serve, together with the others, to show how easy it is to put the short epic line of the English poets into that modern metre. But I

Thus ends the *Andreas*, a poem full, I think, of attractive charm.

Connected with this poem by its imitation of heroic sagas, and by transference of their phrases to Christianity and its saints; and connected with Cynewulf by, at least, an imitation of his manner, is the *Descent into Hell* which is in the Exeter Book. This is but a fragment, but it has inspiration. Some have thought that it may have formed a portion of the *Christ* of Cynewulf. As it stands, I do not see that we can, without violence, insert it into the *Christ*. It has its own careful beginning, and were it not broken off, it would no doubt have had its careful end, for the fragment suggests a large and thoughtful composition. It is true it supplies a part of the history which is wanted in the *Christ*. But the story of the descent into Hades did not, it seems, any more than the Resurrection which is also left out, form a part of the plan of the *Christ*. The simplest and most probable conjecture is that this is a separate poem, the end of which we have lost, on this favourite subject. Wülker says, also, that there is no trace in the *Christ* of any use of the pseudo-gospel of Nicodemus, and that there are traces of its being used in this *Descent into Hell*. This would agree on the whole with Ten Brink's view that the poem was written some time after the *Christ*. During that time Cynewulf might have become acquainted with the gospel of Nicodemus.

There is no positive proof that Cynewulf was the author of this piece, but every one almost has felt that it belongs to him. It has all the manner of the first

am glad to abandon it, for it has not to my ear any more likeness to the real music of Anglo-Saxon verse than the stately march of gorgeous cavalry has to the gallop of a troop of guerillas.

part of the *Christ*, the same trick of dialogue, the same choric outbursts, the same lofty note of poetic praise. There is a passage in which the poet apostrophises Gabriel, Mary, Jerusalem, and Jordan, which is almost parallel with a passage in the *Christ*, and of a kind which stands alone in Anglo-Saxon poetry. It has the very cry of Cynewulf in it. Nevertheless, I cannot think that the poem is contemporary with the *Christ*, but rather with that time in Cynewulf's life in which, wholly at peace about his salvation, he felt himself free to use elements introduced from heroic Saga in his poetry, as he has done in the *Elene*. Indeed, in this *Descent into Hell*, the imitation of the war-poem is more remarkable than in the *Elene*. The women who go to the tomb are Ætheling women. Christ's tomb and death are the tomb and death of an Ætheling. He is himself the joy of Æthelings. He is the victory child of God. The Patriarchs are noble. Even the soldiers are heroes. The women wail over the corse of Jesus as the English wailed over their Kings. John the Baptist is a great captain, and he welcomes Jesus into the Burg of Hell as a Norse captain would welcome his King in the hour of victory. The poem is full of triumphant passages. Here is one—

17. At the dawning of the day   down a troop of angels came:
Stood the singing joy of hosts   round the Saviour's burg.[1]
Open was the Earth-house,   and the Ætheling's corse
Took the sprite of life!   Shivered all the earth,
High rejoiced Hell's-burghers,[2]   for the Hero had awakened,
Full of courage from the clay.   Conquest-sure and wise,
Rose his glorious Majesty.   Then the Hero, John,
Spoke exulting.

[1] That is, round his tomb.

[2] The burghers of hell here are the Old Testament saints, the "spirits in prison."

This is the full Saga note. It is even more remarkable when Christ sets forth on his expedition to hell and breaks down the gates of the burg. I have already used the passage—

33. On his war-path hastened then the Prince of men,
Then the Helm of Heaven willed the walls of Hell
To break down and bow to ruin, and the Burg unclothe
Of its sturdy starkness ; he, the strongest of all kings !
No helm-bearing heroes would he have for battle then ;
None of warriors wearing byrnies did he wish to lead
To the doors of Hell ! Down before him fell the bars,
Down the hinges dashed, Inwards drove the King his way,

All the exiles throng to see him—Adam, Abraham, and the rest—the high-fathers of the world, hosts of noble women, uncounted multitudes. But of the great deeds done John the Baptist saw the most. He beheld "how the gates of hell, that darkness had garmented so long, gleamed in the glory of Christ's coming ; and when he saw it, the great Thegn rejoiced. Greeting, he welcomed the King," and his long speech takes up the rest of this fragment, and breaks off in the midst. It is of an excellent quality, written, I think, to be sung, at least in parts, as a choric hymn. The whole poem is worth a separate study by some careful scholar.

Of the same fine quality, but not built in an heroic mould, is the *Phœnix*, which we may, and with much more certainty, allot to Cynewulf. It is the last of the longer poems, and when we have gone through it, there is nothing left, save the *Dream of the Rood*, of any literary importance. The *Phœnix* is in the Exeter Book and runs to 677 lines. Its source is a Latin poem on the same subject attributed to Lactantius, and the Latin lines are printed under the Anglo-Saxon text by Thorpe in his edition of the Exeter Book.

The writer leaves his original at verse 380 and composes the story of the *Phœnix* into a Christian allegory of the Resurrection. This is the second part, and he has used in it the writings of Ambrose and Baeda. As long as he draws on the so-called Lactantius poem he follows it, in Cynewulf's fashion, sometimes expanding, sometimes shortening the sense. The expansions are chiefly when he is describing natural scenery, and when he is breaking into praise. In the second part the outbursts of laud and honour to God are entirely in Cynewulf's exulting manner, and the description of the Last Judgment closely resembles the descriptions of the same event in the *Christ* and the *Elene*. There are but few of the critics who do not believe in Cynewulf's authorship of this poem. If it be so, all the probabilities go to prove that the poem was written by him after the *Christ* and before the *Elene*.

I have said that the introduction of a strong personal element is the special mark of all the signed poems of Cynewulf, and that the signature is fancifully added to the personal statement. There is no distinct personal element in the *Phœnix*, unless we say that he adopts as his own the quotation he makes from Job "concerning the Resurrection to eternal life," and which he introduces with the words, "Let no man think that I sing this song with lying words; hear now what the wisdom of Job sang." Nor is there any signature, but there is an ending of another kind which Cynewulf, in his fantastic way, may have inserted in place of his runes. The last eleven lines are a mixture of Anglo-Saxon and Latin. The first half of each line is Anglo-Saxon, the last half Latin, and the Latin is alliterated with the Anglo-Saxon.

The poem begins with that description of the paradisaical land where the Phœnix dwells which I have translated (vol. i. p. 296). The second canto describes the Phœnix and its life. The bird lives alone a delightful life in his happy isle. Death never harms him in that land of joy—

90. He shall of the Sun see and watch the voyaging,
And shall come right on 'gainst the candle of the Lord,
'Gainst the gladdening gem ! He shall gaze with eagerness
When upriseth clear that most Ætheling of stars,
O'er the Ocean wave, from the East a-glitter,[1]
Gleaming with his glories, God the Father's work of old,
Beacon bright of God !— Blind the stars shall be,
Wandered under waters to the western realms,
All bedimmed at dawn, when the dark of night,
Wan, away has gone. Then, o'er waves, the Bird,
Firm and feather-proud, o'er the flowing ocean stream,
Under lift and over Lake, looketh eager-hearted
When upcometh fair, from the East a-gliding
O'er the spacious sea, the upshining of the Sun.

The next lines repeat the same motive over again in other words ; and as this is one of the characteristics of Anglo-Saxon poetry, and a special characteristic of Cynewulf who manages it with skill, I insert them here. Repetitions of this kind were not wearying when they were sung, and I believe that when they were deliberately made, as here, for the heightening of the impression, they were perhaps set to different music or to the same music in a different key—

104. So the fair-born fowl at the fountain-head,
At the well-streams, wonneth in a winsomeness unfailing !
There a twelve of times, he, the joy-triumphant one,
In the burn doth bathe him, ere the beacon cometh,
Candle of the Æther ; and, as often, he
Of those softly-joyous springings of the Wells

[1] These lines are, with changes, repeated below. These descriptive passages have, owing to their frequent refrains either of motive or description, something of a lyric strain.

Tastes at every bath— billow-cold they are !—
Then he soars on high, when his swimming-play is done,
With uplifted heart on a lofty tree—
Whence across the Eastern paths, with an ease the greatest,
He may watch the Sun's outwending, when that Welkin-taper
O'er the battle of the billows brilliantly is blickering,
Flaming light of light ! All the land is fair-adorned;
Lovely grows the world when the gem of glory,
O'er the going of great Ocean, glitters on the ground,
Over all the middle-earth— mightiest this of stars !

This is the repetition, and very well done it is. Then Cynewulf describes the life of the Bird till evening falls, and I wonder that there are still folk who think that there is no poetry in early England. I translate, as before, literally—

120\. Soon as ere the Sun, o'er the salt sea-streamings,
Towers up on high, then the gray and golden fowl
Flieth forth, fair-shining, from the forest tree;
Fareth, snell of feathers, in its flight along the lift;
Sounds, and sings his way (ever) sunwards on.

Then as beautiful becomes all the bearing of the bird;
Borne his breast is upwards in a blissfulness of joy !
In his song-craft he makes changes, in his lucid voicing,
Far more wonderfully now than did ever bairn of man
Hear, the Heavens below; since the High-exalted King,
He the Worker of all glory, did the world establish,
Earth, and eke the Heaven.

The up-ringing of his voice
Than all other song-crafts sweeter is and lovelier;
Far away more winsome than whatever winding lay.
Not alike to that clear sound may the clarion be,
Nor the horn nor harp-clang, nor the heroes' singing—
Not of one of them on earth— nor the organ tone,
Nor the singing of the sackbut, nor sweet feathers of the swan,
None of all the other joys that the Eternal shaped
For the mirthfulness of men in this mournful world.
So he sings and softly sounds, sweetly blessed in joy,
Till within the southern sky doth the Sun become
Sunken to its setting— silent then is he.
Listening now he lends his ear, then uplifts his head,
Courage-thrilled and wise in thought ! Thrice he shaketh then
Feathers whet for flight— so the fowl is still.

Thus lives the Phœnix for a thousand years; then,

attended by troops of birds, flies far to the Syrian land, where in a desert place, on a high tree, he makes his nest for death—

182. Then the wind is still and the weather fair ;
Pure and holy there shines the Heaven's gem ;
Clouds are cleared away, and the glorious crowds of waters
Still are standing there ; every storm therein
Under Heaven is hushed.

In this sweet weather the Phœnix builds his nest of noble plants and odorous leaves; and when at summer-time the sun is brightest, the home of the bird is heated and the fang of fire devours bird and nest; but the ashes, balled together, grow into an apple, and in the apple a wondrous worm waxes till it becomes an eagle, and then a Phœnix as before. Only honey-dew he eats that falls at midnight, and when he has gathered all the relics of his old body and covered them with sweet herbs, he takes them in his claws and, flying back to his native land, buries them deep in its earth. All men, all the birds, flock to see his flight, but he outstrips their sight, and comes alone to his happy isle, where once more he "dwells in the grove, delighting in the welling streams."

When Cynewulf has thus brought his bird back, he makes out of its story two allegories, one of the life of the Saints, and another of Christ who, after the Judgment, flies through the air attended by all the worshipping souls like birds; and each soul becomes a Phœnix, and dwells for ever young where joy never changes, praising God in the burg of life. Then again he makes Christ the Phœnix who passed through the fire of death to glorious life, "Therefore to him be praise for ever and ever. Hallelujah."

This allegorical treatment of the life of beasts and birds, and also of the great tales of the world;

the taking up of the whole of natural history into the realm of the spiritual—human thoughts and emotions being imputed to the animals;—is of great antiquity, and especially among Semitic peoples. Through the Old Testament, through the Talmud, through the parables of Christ, it descended to the early Christian writers and was increased among them by their contact with Syria, Arabia, and India; but the taste for it may be said to have been established by the Fathers of the Church. Ambrose, for example, uses the Phœnix as the symbol of the Resurrection. It was common in the eighth century, the time of which we are writing, and it steadily grew during the Middle Ages among poets and preachers till it was carried to an extreme height. In the catalogue, for example, of Duke Humphrey's library we find the whole of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* moralised in this allegorical fashion. This is not the place to discuss so large and fruitful a subject, but the allegorical treatment of the Phœnix by Cynewulf leads me to place here three other English poems—the *Whale*, the *Panther*, and the *Partridge*,—which are either intended to be a complete *Physiologus* by their writer, or may be parts of a much more extended collection.

A *Physiologus* was a collection of descriptions of certain Beasts, Birds, and Fishes, and of the legends connected with them, with a religious allegory tacked on to them. The earliest *Physiologus* was in Greek, and from it the Æthiopian as well as the Latin *Physiologus* were translated. This Latin one, it is conjectured, was the source of the three Anglo-Saxon poems we possess, and also of two manuscripts of the ninth century, discovered by Cahier (*B* and *C*), which agree for the most part with one another. In *B*, after

twenty-two other animals, the Panther, the Whale, and the Partridge follow one another. In *C* the Panther precedes the Whale, and the Partridge is left out. In the ancient Greek *Physiologus* also the Panther comes first of the three, and the Whale and the Partridge follow. It is suggested by critics that the Anglo-Saxon writer chose these three concluding animals, not at random, but with the intention of making out of them—since each of them represents one of the three kingdoms—a short but complete *Physiologus*. At the close of the poem of the *Partridge*, *Finit* stands in the manuscript. The *Partridge* is a mere fragment, but the *Panther* and the *Whale* are complete, and have some literary interest.

In far lands, in deep hollows lives the Panther, glittering in a coat as vari-coloured as Joseph's, lonely, gentle, harmless to all, save to the dragon, that envenomed scather. When he has fed, he seeks a hidden place among the mountain dells and slumbers for three nights. On the third day, when he wakes, a lofty, sweet, ringing sound comes from his mouth, and with the song a most delightful steam of sweet-smelling breath, more grateful than all the blooms of herbs and blossoms of the trees. Then from the burgs, and from the seats of kings, and from castle halls, pour forth the troops of war-men and the swift lance-brandishers, and all the animals, to hear the song and meet the perfume. So is the Lord God, the Prince of Joys, and so the hope of salvation which he gives. That is a noble fragrance.

The *Whale*, since it has to do with the sea, is more wrought out by the poet, and more interesting than the *Panther*. The first part of the legend—of the sailors landing on the monster's back as on an island

—comes perhaps originally from the East. It is in the story of Sinbad the Sailor, but it continued for a long time in English literature, through Middle English to Chaucer, and so on to Milton's simile. Our description here is the first English use of the tale. It is fairly done, and filled in with special sea-phrases. I will tell, he says of the mickle whale whose name is

7. Floater of the Flood-streams old, Fastitocalon.
Like it is in aspect to the unhewn stone,
Such as movèd is at the margent of the sea,
By sand-hills surrounded, thickly set with sea-weeds;
So that the surge-sailors ween (their souls within),
That upon some island with their eyes they look.
Then they hawser fast their high-stemmèd ships
With the anchored cables on the No-land there;
Moor their mares of ocean at this margin of the main!
. . . . Thus the keels are standing
Close beside that stead, surged around by ocean's-stream.[1]

The players of the sea climb on the island, waken a fire, and are joyous, but suddenly the Ocean-guest plunges down with the bark, and in the hall of death makes fast with drowning ship and seamen. So plays the Fiend with the souls of men. Yet another fashion has this proud Rusher through the water. When he is hungry this Ocean-ward opens his wide lips, and

[1] Compare Milton—

Or that sea-beast
Leviathan, which God of all his works
Created hugest that swim the ocean-stream.
Him, haply slumbering on the Norway foam,
The pilot of some small night-foundered skiff,
Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,
With fixèd anchor in his scaly rind,
Moors by his side under the lee, while night
Invests the sea, and wishèd morn delays.
So stretched out huge in length the Arch-Fiend lay,
Chained on the burning lake.

It is a whole lesson in art to contrast this with its predecessor of the eighth century. "Ocean-stream" is pure Anglo-Saxon for sea. "Thickly set with sea-weeds" is literally "greatest of sea-weeds or sea reeds." I take it to mean that the stone looks as if it were itself the very greatest of sea-weeds, so thickly is it covered with them.

so winsome an odour pours forth that the other fishes stream into his mouth till it is filled;[1] then quick together crash the grim gums around his prey. So too it is with men and the accursed one. When life is over, he claps his fierce jaws, the gates of hell, behind them. This is the common image of the entrance of hell—as seen, for example, in the rude pictures of the Caedmon manuscript—like the gaping mouth of a monstrous fish.

I think it probable that these three small poems, which a literary connection has led me to link on to the *Phœnix*, were collected together if not actually made at York during the time when its great School was flourishing. The history of that School will form the following and the last chapter of this book. It was in full career during the whole time in which we suppose Cynewulf was writing; and though I do not think that he wrote in that town, yet what he wrote was read, we may be sure, at that central seat of Northumbrian learning. Among all the Latin studies pursued there, it is not likely that English would altogether be neglected. A few scholars at least—and we know that Baeda did so—would care for the native poetry of their own country, study it, and collect it. The seats of great libraries become the home of literary collections. I conjecture, then, that during the fifty years or so when the School of York was famous over England and on the Continent, the English poetry of the past, the lays of Beowulf, the war-songs, the songs of Caedmon and many

[1] I wonder if the ancient sailors had ever met the sperm-whale, for this part of the legend contains things true both of it and of the Greenland whale. When the sperm-whale dies of the disease which produces Ambergris, it leaves behind it, lingering on the ocean, a sweet scent. The Right whale feeds on small animalculæ which the whalers call *Brit*. It takes in with open mouth the sea thick with these small beasts, and then closing its gates of whale-bone ejects the water. The *Brit* are retained behind the fence of bone.

others, were gathered at York, studied, and arranged. It is likely enough that the Christian editing of *Beowulf*, and of semi-heathen poems like the *Wanderer* and the *Seafarer*, was done in the cloistered shades of the great School.

It is still more likely that the class of poems of which I now briefly write—collections of proverbial folk-sayings, sententious moral poems containing selected passages from the old or the new poetry put together within a framework of the collector's own writing—were made at York during the literary leisure of the time, and received and heard with pleasure by Ecgberht, Æthelberht, and Alcuin. However that may be, it is under this convenient and probable supposition that I place the *Gnomic Verses*, the *Crafts or Gifts of Men*, and the *Weirds of Men*, all of which are contained in the Exeter Book.

The *Gnomic Verses* are in four parts, three of which are in the Exeter Book, and the fourth is in the Cotton MS. at Cambridge. They consist of folk-proverbs, maxims, short descriptions of human life and natural occurrences, thrown together without any apparent arrangement in subjects. They vary in length from half a line to six or eight lines. Some are of the plainest simplicity, others show some knowledge of the world; some are quotations from the poets; there is one at the eighty-first line which is taken from *Beowulf*, 1387; there are two others which seem to be extracted from the *Seafarer*. Some of them relate to natural phenomena, some to the life of animals, many to the customs and manners of men and women; some may have come down from heathen times and be very old,[1] others

[1] These are of special interest. It is not improbable (and this has been frequently said) that we have in some of them old folk-verses which the English

have been Christianised; others, as plainly, have had their origin when Christianity had been well established; and some belong, I think, to a time long after the eighth century. I think it probable that the original collector was some literary person at York, during Ecgberht or Æthelberht's time, who was interested in heathen verse and customs. The lines from *Beowulf* suggest this, and the resemblances to the *Seafarer* suggest that the collector was a Northumbrian. Then we may imagine that the collection, brought southward to Wessex, was taken up again after the days of Ælfred, new matter added, the introduction of the first part written, the close of the first, second, and third. The last line, for example, of the first part is the wish of the editor to be thanked by his readers for the trouble he has taken "Let him have thanks who got together for us these pleasures." The last four lines of the third part do not appear to me to belong to the lines which precede them, but to be an ancient folk-saying concerning weapons. I conjecture, then, that they formed part of the body of the manuscript which the scribe was copying, and that, finding he had omitted them as he wrote, he tagged them on at the end. I give them here—

> Yare be the Warboard and lance-head on shaft,
> Edge on the sword and point on the spear,
> Brave heart in warriors; a helm for the keen,
> And the smallest of hoards to the coward in soul.

That has the heroic heathen ring. It belongs to the other phrases in earlier parts of the *Verses* which treat

used in the old England over the sea, and that they are specimens of the earliest form of English verse. I have inserted a few of them into a note at the end of this volume.

of weapons of war, such as "The bow must have its arrow."

Two other poems, somewhat related to each other in subject, may also have been edited at the School of York. They are writings which, in their contemplative view of human life, would naturally attract the attention of retired and pensive scholars, men like Gray, who looked from their college windows on the vicissitudes of human affairs and turned them into reflective odes. These are the *Gifts of Men* and the *Fates of Men*. They have both, without any sufficient proof, been allotted to Cynewulf. They have also been made into two separate treatments by the same poet of one subject. Whoever wrote, says Rieger, the *Gifts of Men*, wrote also the *Weirds of Men*. Our gifts are often our fates. But few support Rieger in this, and Wülker maintains that the art in both poems is different, and the poets different, and that Cynewulf had nothing to do with either.

The chief interest of the *Gifts of Men* is that some of it may have come down from heathen times. The introduction plainly belongs to a Christian editor, and so does the close; and it borrows its main theme either from Gregory's homily on Job or from St. Paul's enumeration of the Gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians xii., "There are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit." Half of the gifts are profane enough—harp-playing, knowledge of the stars, building, running, archery, steering the war-ship through the sea, smithery of war-weapons, the goldsmith's craft, companionship in the mead-hall, skill in dice, in riding, in hunting, in drinking, in giving dooms in council when wise men make national laws, in hawking, in juggling. It is probable there was a heathen or semi-heathen

poem on the gifts of men which both Cynewulf in the *Christ* and the writer of this poem had before them, and that this writer mingled it up with a free adaptation of Gregory's homily, of the xii. of 1 Corinthians, and perhaps of some Latin hymn on the same matter. There is no poetic or literary quality in this catalogue of gifts, or in the reflections on them.

A different air breathes through the poem on the *Weirds of Men.* It has some form; the introduction of the poem is brief and excellent; the different fates of men are touched with a poet's hand. It is a strange criticism which imagines that he who composed this could have composed the *Gifts of Men.* It belongs to the good time, and I should not be surprised if it were written within the first three decades of the eighth century, and perhaps by Cynewulf in his semi-heathen, semi-Christian time. There is a manner of painting human life in it which recalls some of the *Riddles.* But this is mere conjecture. It begins with the birth of a child, its growth, its education by its parents. "God only knows," it says, "what the winters will bring to the grown-up man,"—and then it enumerates the different kinds of miserable deaths which may befall him—death by the wolf, "the gray ganger of the heath," death by hunger, from blindness, in war, by lameness, by falling from a tree, by the gallows, by fire, by quarrel at the feast; misery through exile and loss of friends, and poverty. But others, by the might of God, will win through all misfortune to a hoar old age, happy and prosperous, and with troops of friends,—so manifold are the dooms God gives to men. Then he seems to slip into a telling of the gifts rather than of the fates of men—and we have done over again, only done by a poet, all

that we have read of in the previous poem,—the gifts of the warrior, the learned man, the boon-companion, the harper, the falcon-trainer, and the goldsmith who adorns with his art the man of the Britons' king (*brytencyninges beorn*) a phrase which may help us to approach the date of the poem.

As I have already used the most vigorous of the pictures of English life contained in these poems in the chapters on the Settlement and War in Poetry, I may, with this short sketch, leave the poem behind me,[1] and with it all the poetry which preceded Ælfred, except the *Dream of the Rood.* Other verses, it is true, on various subjects, lie scattered through the Exeter Book, and through the manuscripts in various libraries. But they do not belong to this time, or might have been written at any time, and I may say by any monk, from the seventh to the eleventh centuries. They belong to the next volume of this book, and we turn, to end this long tale of our earliest poetry, to the *Dream of the Rood*, the last, as it seems to me, of the important poems of the eighth century.

One portion of this poem has been already discussed—the personal epilogue with which it closes. I have taken it to be the last thing that Cynewulf wrote, and that it tells the tale of his last days. It speaks his farewell to life, and seems to sing the dirge of Northumbrian poetry. I place it here as the epilogue to this history of Early English song. I believe the position I give it to be historical, but I do not

[1] There are two other poems in the Exeter Book which have been somewhat mixed up with these—one *On the Spirit of Men* ("Bi manna mode"), and the other *On the Leasing of Men* ("Bi manna lease"). They have no literary value whatever. They are nothing more than fragments of sermons in verse, and may have been written at any time. The first is on the glory of humility and the baseness of pride, and the second is built on Psalm xxviii.

assert it to be historical. It is not possible to say with any certainty that its date falls within the last ten or twenty years of the eighth century, or that it was even written by Cynewulf. A great debate clashes round its authorship. A large number of German and English scholars assert that Cynewulf was its writer, but they have somewhat lessened the weight of their opinion by fastening also on him many inferior poems which have nothing of the artist in them from head to tail. Wülker, with others, seems to think it most improbable, if not impossible, that Cynewulf wrote the poem, and goes so far as to include the discussion of it among the poems he classifies under the name of Caedmon.[1] Some have attributed it to Caedmon himself, partly backing their opinion by the supposed translation of the runic title on the Ruthwell Cross—*Caedmon me fawed* ("Caedmon made me"), and connecting this with the lines carved on the Cross, which are almost identical with lines contained in this *Dream of the Rood.* But the lines may have been carved in the tenth century, and the assertion that "Caedmon made me" be no more than the carver's opinion, or even the name of the carver. No certainty can be gained on that path.

A much stronger argument against Cynewulf's authorship arises, I think, from the metre of the poem; and the argument is stronger against my own view that it was the last of the poems of Cynewulf, than it would be against those who think it to be one of his earliest poems. Almost the whole of the story of the dream is written in the long-epic and Caedmonian line, and though Cynewulf does use this line now and then in his

[1] He has collected the reasons as yet given for or against the authorship of Cynewulf, in his *Grundriss*, at pp. 189-196.

signed poems, he uses it with great rarity, and never in any continuous narration. He does not use it at all in the *Elene* which is his last signed poem; and it is certainly very much against my opinion that the *Elene* preceded the *Dream of the Rood* that Cynewulf, having fixed himself down in the *Elene* to the short-epic line, should break loose from it, and use in the *Dream* that solemn but various, dignified but rushing long-epic line which is found in the *Genesis*, *Exodus*, and *Judith*, in the earlier German poems, such as *Muspilli* and the *Hildbrand Lay*, and in Icelandic lays, such as those of *Atli* and *Harbard*. I might say that Cynewulf was acquainted with the line; that he uses it now and then in the *Christ* and in *Guthlac*, and that there is no reason why he should not use it again, at the close of his life, if he liked it, and for a special purpose, especially as the use of it continued after his death in England,[1] Germany, and Iceland, along with that of the short-epic line; but I must confess that the more I have read the *Dream of the Rood* the more I have been impressed with the feeling—arising from the archaic sentiment as well as from the long-lined metre of the dream-part of the poem—that this portion at least is older than Cynewulf and does belong to the Caedmonian School. But I have been equally impressed with the extreme unlikeness of the closing part of the poem to the dream-part, and its extreme likeness to the work of Cynewulf and to the way in which he thought and felt. The introduction also is in Cynewulf's veritable manner, and both the introduction and the close are written in the short-epic line. The narration of the dream itself is with one exception in the

[1] In England, *if Genesis B* was written, as they say, in or about Ælfred's time.

long line, and stands between the short-lined beginning and end like the ancient centre and keep of a mediæval castle, now turned into a country house and flanked by two wings built in the Tudor period. The conjecture then has occurred to me that there was an older poem describing the crucifixion of Jesus which may possibly have been written by Caedmon or one of his school, and which Cynewulf took up and worked at in his own fashion, adding to it where and how he pleased, and changing its mode of presentation —making it, for instance, into a dream, and adding the personification of the Tree. Not only are the introduction and the conclusion in his own metre, but also the description which the Tree gives of itself as living once on the edge of the wood before its enemies cut it down. The conjecture may be thought too bold, but it accounts for the double metre of the poem; it does away with the strongest argument against Cynewulf's authorship; it gets rid of the difficulty of the want of unity of feeling which exists between the dream and the rest on the supposition of both being by the same writer; and it leaves to Cynewulf a number of passages which are steeped in his peculiar personality, and which it would be extremely hazardous to allot to any one else but himself.[1] It is true he has not signed the poem, and it is said that, as he had imitators, he would have signed it if he had written it, and that he has signed four poems. But a man is not bound always to sign his poems,

[1] A re-making of this kind is quite in accordance, I think, with Anglo-Saxon custom. The *Azarias* in the Exeter Book is an instance, I believe, of the same thing. It is a portion of the *Daniel* taken out, and worked up afterwards by another poet. Nor did the custom die. Chaucer and Shakspere practised it. It is in fact common to all ages of poetry, except perhaps to a time like our own, when the plagiarism-hunters have spoiled this interesting and pleasant practice.

even though it be his custom. We do not know that he signed the *Guthlac*, but we believe he wrote it. The question of the quasi-signature of the *Riddles* in the supposed charade of Riddle i. is still doubtful, but we allot to him the greater part of the *Riddles*. The *Phœnix* which every one gives to him is not signed; and if this *Dream* was written, as I think, quite at the close of his life, it is not improbable that he saw no need to sign it, or never thought of signing it. I cannot see that his not signing it is any convincing evidence that it is not his, if the probabilities of his authorship are great.

And they are great. The introduction is, with the exception of a few lines which I refer to the older poem, entirely in his manner. The personal cry, "I, stained with sins, wounded with my guilt," is almost a quotation from his phrases in the *Elene* and *Juliana*. Then the impersonation of the Tree, the account of its life in the wood, is exceedingly like the beginning and the manner of some of the *Riddles*; and the vivid fashion in which it is conceived as sorrowing and trembling, as full of hate and love, as wounded like a warrior with shafts, recalls the work and belongs to the imagination of him who conceived the personality of the Sword and the Bow and the Loom. Moreover, the personal, subjective element which is found in his signed poems and which no other Anglo-Saxon poet possesses, is greater in the latter part of this poem than it is in any of his signed works. It is also of the same kind as it is in the *Christ*, the *Juliana*, and the *Elene*, and sounds a similar note. There are also similarities of expression, but these have not much value, for there are also differences of expression. Lastly, the worship paid in the poem to the Cross and

the glorification of it is a constant element in two of his genuine poems. He speaks in the *Christ* of the Rood in much the same manner as he does here. He speaks in the *Elene* of the "Tree of glory which he had always in mind" before he wrote of its discovery by Helena. We understand from the *Elene* that his change from remorse to spiritual happiness was bound up with the light-bringing office or appearance of the Cross.[1] All these things are explained if we see in the *Dream* a personal statement of Cynewulf in which he deliberately refers to having seen long ago a Vision of the Cross, and the story of which he now tells on the verge of the grave. It is said that he would not have repeated in his last days so much of what he said in the *Elene*. Why should he not repeat himself in another form? It is a common habit of the poets; it is a characteristic of old age; and recapitulation is, moreover, a mark of Cynewulf's work. To say that it is not natural or probable that an old man, as he waits for death, would tell over again the story of what happened long ago when first he knew his Saviour, is not true. It is both probable and natural

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[1] Too much must not, however, be made of this, for the English Christians of this time seem to have worshipped the Cross as much as the Spaniards; and I daresay the common worship was increased, as I think the Constantine and Helena story became a favourite, by the remembrance of Oswald's planting of the Cross in the sight of his warriors before the battle of Heavenfield. Lingard quotes the words which Alcuin puts into Oswald's mouth—

Prosternite vestros
Vultus ante crucem, quam vertice montis in isto
Erexi, rutilat Christi quae clara trophaeo,
Quae quoque nunc nobis praestabit ab hoste triumphum.
Alcuin, *De Pont. Ebor.*

Ceolfrid, leaving Wearmouth, "adorat crucem." "Tuam crucem adoramus," prays Alcuin. Ealdhelm and others were accustomed to call themselves "crucicolae." The Cross stood in their minds for Him who died thereon. Cynewulf's special worship for the Cross is not then remarkable—yet it is. We do not find the same special direction of poetry anywhere else among the verse of the earlier English.

that he would enshrine at the last, by means of his special art, the most important moment of his life, and leave it as a legacy to his few friends of whom he speaks so tenderly. These are the reasons for my belief that the poem is by Cynewulf, and his last work.

"Lo," it begins—

Listen—of all dreams I'll the dearest tell,
That at mid of night met me (while I slept),
When word-speaking folk wonnèd in their rest.
I methought I saw led into the lift,
All enwreathed with light, wonderful, a Tree,
Brightest it of trees! All that beacon was
Over-gushed with gold; jewels were in it;
At its foot were four,[1] five were also there
High upon the axle-span, and beheld it there, all the angels of the Lord[2]
Winsome for the world to come! Surely that was not, of a wicked man the gallows.
But the spirits of the saints saw it (shining) there,
And the men who walk the mould and this mighty Universe.
Strange that stem of Victory was! Then I, spotted o'er with sins,
Wounded with my woeful guilts, saw the Wood of glory
All with joys a-shining, all adorned with weeds,
Gyred with gold around. Gems had worthily
Wandered in a wreath round this woodland Tree.

Nathless could I through the gold come to understand
How the sufferers strove of old[3]— since it now began
Blood to sweat on its right side. I was all with sorrows vexed
Fearful then I was, 'fore that vision fair, for I saw that fleet fire-beacon
Change in clothing and in colour! Now it was with wet be-clouded,
Now with running blood was red, then again enriched with gems.
Long the time I lay, lying where I was,[4]
Looking, heavy-hearted, on the Healer's Tree—
Till at last I heard how it loudly cried.
These the words the best of woods now began to speak—

[1] "Four jewels were at the edges of the earth."

[2] This line and the following—in the long metre—belong, I think, to the original poem which I conjecture Cynewulf was working on.

[3] "The long-past battle of the sufferers," *i.e.* of the Tree and of Him it bore.

[4] Here Cynewulf, as I think, having used with personal modifications the long lines of the ancient poem, takes up his own work for a time.

"Long ago it was, yet I ever think of it,
How that I was hewèd down where the holt had end!
From my stock I was dissevered; strong the foes that seized me there;
Made of me a mocking-stage, bade me lift their men outlawed.[1]
So the men on shoulders moved me till upon a mount they set me;
Many were the foemen who did fix me there—
Then I saw the Lord, Lord of Folk-kin He,
Hastening march with mickle power since He would upmount on me."

"But I—I dared not, against my Lord's word, bow myself or burst asunder, though I saw all regions of earth trembling; I might have felled his foes, but I stood fast—"

Then the Hero young, armed Himself for war and Almighty God He was;
Strong and staid of mood stepped He on the gallows high,
Brave of soul in sight of many, for He would set free mankind.
Then I shivered there—when the Champion clipped me round;
But I dared not then, cringe me to the earth.[2] l. 39.

"A Rood was I upreared, rich the King I lifted up, Lord of all the heavens, yet I dared not fall. With dark nails they pierced me through, on me the dagger strokes are seen; wounds they were of wickedness. Yet I dared not do them scathe; they reviled us both together. From head to foot was I drenched with blood, poured from this hero's side, when he had sent forth His Spirit. A host of wrathful weirds I bore upon that mount. I saw the Lord of peoples serve a cruel service: thick darkness had enwreathed with clouds the corse of the King. Shadow, wan under the welkin, pressed down the clear shining of the sun.

[1] *Waefer-syne* = a scene, a spectacle, a theatre. The Cross is as it were a stage on which the punishment and guilt of the criminal is displayed. Grein translates, "bade their slaves lift me up," but I think that the translation in the text is the most natural. It makes the Wood state simply, and at first, the shameful uses to which it was put.

[2] This line is not longer than the original, and the pauses are pretty much the same. Short lines follow it, and then the long line is taken up again. I allot, as before, the long lines to the original poem on which Cynewulf worked, and the short lines to his own hand.

All creation wept, mourned the fall of its King; Christ was on the Rood. I beheld it all; I was crushed with sorrow. . . . Then they took Almighty God; from that heavy pain they lifted him; but the warriors left me there to stand streaming with blood. I was all wounded with shafts." Then he tells of the deposition, and how he watched it—

So they laid him down, limb-wearied; stood beside the head of his lifeless corse.
Then they looked upon him, him the Lord of Heaven, and he rested there for a little time
Sorely weary he, when the mickle strife was done! Then before his Banes, in the sight of them,
Did the men begin, here to make a grave for him. And they carved it there, of a glittering stone,
Laid him low in it, him the Lord of Victory! Over him poor folk sang a lay of sorrow
On that eventide. l. 63.

There he rested with a little company. But we stood on the hill for a while, dropping blood, till men buried us deep, and that was a dreadful Weird. And now far and wide, when the servants of the Lord discovered me, men honour me. Now I bid thee, Man beloved of me, tell this dream to men.

The Rood then speaks of judgment to come, and that whoso beareth this best of signs in his heart will have no fear on that day. It ceases speech; and that personal part of the poem follows on which I have already written.

This is the last of the important poems of the eighth century. It is good, but not very good. The older part, if my conjecture be right,[1] is the best, and its

[1] I have called it *my* conjecture, but I have since found that the writers of the *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, in their *Excursus on Metres* have had a somewhat similar opinion. They say "In the Lay of the Rood, attributed to Caedmon, as it seems, on the Ruthwell Cross, we have the purest piece of poetry in this metre. In the Vercelli book in which it is preserved, there is tacked on to it another poem on a somewhat similar subject, but wholly different in style and metre, which may very possibly be Cynewulf's." I think the *whole* was re-worked by Cynewulf.

reworking by Cynewulf has so broken it up that its dignity is much damaged. The shaping is rude, but the imagination has indeed shaped it. The image of the towering Tree, now shining through a golden light and overwrought like a Rood at Ripon or Hexham with jewelled lines of ornament, now veiled in a crimson mist and streaming with blood, is conceived with power, but it is not to be compared with the image of the mighty Rood in the *Christ* which illuminates with ruddy light the heavens and the earth and all the hosts of angels and of men summoned from their graves to judgment. The invention of the Tree, bringing its soul from the far-off wood, alive and suffering with every pang of the great Sufferer, shivering through every vein of it when Christ, the young Hero, clasped it round, and mourning when he lay beneath, and longing to fall on and slay his foes, and conscious that on it, as on a field of battle, Death and Hell were conquered, is also well worth praise, but the praise must not be carried too far. The workmanship is not the workmanship of a fine artist. We cannot expect it, and the wonder is that at this time it was so good.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE SCHOOL OF YORK

While Cynewulf and his imitators were making the poems about which we have now written, the Collegiate School at York, founded on a secure basis by Ecgberht while Baeda was still alive, was steadily flourishing. Under its auspices not only Latin but English literature was cared for, if I am right in my guess that it was at York that those collections of English verse were made, which were afterwards brought to Wessex in the days of Ælfred. That school began no doubt with Wilfrid, but it did not become the notable school of England till the days of Archbishop Ecgberht, and it ran a noble and vigorous career of fifty years. After 782 it began to decay, but with a certain stately slowness. When it was dead—and it finally died of the Danes—its learning and its spirit, having emigrated with Alcuin, went forth to animate the wide empire of Charles the Great. It is the history of this school, the last home of literature in the England of the eighth century, which we have now to write, and the tale of it will conclude this book.

After the death of Baeda in 735, the seat of letters was transferred from Jarrow to York. Learning passed from a provincial monastery to the centre of the life of

Northumbria. It passed from the guardianship of one man to the watchful care of a number of trained scholars, acting together, and teaching, like professors, their own special subjects, under the rule of one Head. We may, with some justice, call the School of York the first English University. Canterbury, under Theodore, was not more than a brilliant monastic school, and at Theodore's death its literary influence died. But the Heads of York provided for the continuance of the school, and for an organisation of it which we might call corporate. The system of teaching seems to have been subdivided, specialised, and handed down intact for at least two generations. York became the storehouse and distributor of learning for civilised Europe. Scholars flocked to it from all parts of Germany, Gaul, Italy, and Ireland. The new European schools, desiring a teacher, either sent one of their own men to take, as it were, a degree at York, or fetched to rule over them an Englishman who had the York certificate. If we add to these things the Cathedral, the great library, the collegiate buildings where the teachers and the pupils lived together, something of the image of a University is presented to our eyes.

The town itself was not unworthy of the fame it attained in learning. It had been the capital of Roman Britain, and Britain lay so outside of the Empire that York was called *altera Roma*. It might have even been called an imperial city. Constantius dwelt in it. When Baeda takes trouble to record that Severus died and that Constantine was made Emperor within its walls, we feel that the historic imagination of the learned English had cast around it, like a toga, the dignity of Rome. Long before Baeda, the Northumbrians made it their chief city. It was the centre of

the supremacy of Eadwine, and it finally became the royal seat of the Northumbrian kings. It saw the first Christian King of Northumbria baptized, and he and Paullinus set up the little chapel of wood which grew into the Minster. Its spiritual and ecclesiastical history equalled in interest its political history, and now at the time of which we write, it became again the seat of an archbishopric. No doubt, this addition to its ecclesiastical position gave its school a greater vogue in England and in Europe.

Nor was its people or its situation unworthy of its memories. It was thickly populated by a thriving, brave, and comfortable folk. To the crowd of its own citizens were added a number of foreigners who came to dwell in it for the sake of gain or education. The landscape that surrounded it was lovely; its air healthy; the Ouse flowed full beside its walls and was joined by the Foss, then a broad, deep and sluggish stream. In the triangle the streams made lay the town, but it had extended far beyond its walls, and the well-watered plains were covered with houses. The flowery meadows which bordered the river, the wooded hills beyond, earned the praise of Alcuin who loved his *Alma Mater* well. Learning had here a softer clime and dwelling-place than had nourished its hardy youth among the rocky fields, and near the stormy tides of Jarrow.[1]

This was the city which, as the home of Letters, rose into fame with Ecgberht who, at the date of Baeda's

[1] Hanc piscosa suis undis interfluit Usa,
Florigeros ripis praetendens undique campos;
Collibus et silvis tellus hinc inde decora
Nobilibusque locis habitatio pulchra, salubris,
Fertilitate sui multos habitura colonos,
Quo variis populis et regnis undique lecti
Spe lucri veniunt, quaerentes divite terra
Divitias, sedem sibimet, lucrumque laremque.
Alcuin, *De Pont. Ebor.* 30.

death, became Archbishop of York. He had succeeded Wilfrid II. as Bishop in 732. A year or two afterwards, and perhaps at Ecgberht's own urging,[1] Baeda had sent to York his *Epistola ad Egbertum*, of the form and style of which I have already written. A brief abstract of its contents will now show us the state of Northumbria and the work which lay before Ecgberht. "Be good," it said, "let your language and life be decent and your doctrine sound. Study the Scriptures, ordain more priests, translate the Lord's Prayer and the Creed into English, look after your diocese, there are hamlets in the mountains which have never seen a bishop. The greed of bishops has prevented the subdivision of dioceses. Let there be twelve bishoprics in Northumbria, and do you get the pallium. As to the monasteries, they are in an evil way. There is no proper discipline, and a host of abuses. Lay folk, for thirty years past, have purchased lands for monasteries which, freed from secular jurisdiction, have become their own property. Almost every praefectus has done this; the officers of the King have followed their example; their wives are lodged in their houses; and all of them do what they like. Hence the whole diocese is filled with luxury, corruption, and disorder. Reform, reform." This was the ecclesiastical condition, and it is plain that in monasteries of this type, and in the midst of such abuses, learning was not likely to continue to flourish. Ecgberht took them in hand and did all he could, not all he wished. At least, if they could not be bettered, he bettered his own house. The community at York was lifted into an example for the whole diocese.

[1] I believe that Ecgberht and Baeda concocted this letter together. The warnings given to Ecgberht about decent language and other matters in which Baeda knew Ecgberht did not sin, appear to be directed to others through Ecgberht, and this seems a pious and courteous way of blame.

The political condition, as well as the ecclesiastical, had some influence on the literary history of the school of York, and at two points. First, a certain renewed glory and peace in Northumbria now accompanied for too brief a period the effort Ecgberht was making at York, and enabled his school to develop itself in a quiet safety. King Eadberht, who succeeded Baeda's friend Ceolwulf in 737 or 738, brought Northumbria into better order and recovered some of the dominion it had lost. This peace with honour would help the work at York. It only lasted till 756, when a dreadful disaster at Niwanbyrig was the cause that two years afterwards Eadberht abdicated and settled at York for the rest of his life. Secondly, we must remember that Eadberht was brother of Ecgberht, and that from 737 to 758 the King gave his brother full royal patronage. It is plain they were on good terms, for when the King abdicated he went at once to live with the Archbishop. I cannot but think that his presence, even as a retired monarch, gave support and prestige to the school. He died in the year 768, two years after Ecgberht. Between them, I imagine, they practically ruled the city.

Ecgberht then had external support, and he was worthy of it, both as prince and scholar. He was a splendid and generous man, with fine tastes. Richly carved vessels, richly figured silks, elaborate music were used and cherished in the Minster.[1] Round

[1] The arts of embroidery and illumination, of working in gold, silver, and precious stones had steadily grown in Northumbria. Monks, even the anchorite in his cell, wrought at vessels and bindings for the sacred offices. The best instance out of many is the famous "Evangeliarium," called also the *Durham Book* or the *Lindisfarne Gospels*, which, after a long and curious history, now rests in the British Museum. Eadfrith, Bishop of Lindisfarne, had written and illuminated it. It was begun during Cuthbert's life. Æthelwald, who succeeded Eadfrith, and who caused to be made "a lovely cross" of wrought stone as a memorial of

about the Cathedral and in connection with it rose the schools, filled, as I have said, with students from England, Ireland, Gaul, Germany, and Italy. Ecgberht, as the Head, undertook the finishing course of religious and theological instruction. The other branches of learning were put into the hands of his assistants. The education began with grammar and continued through literature and philosophy and such other subjects as Theodore and Hadrian had taught at Canterbury. The pupils gained a fair acquaintance with the Latin poets, some knowledge of the Greek fathers, and as much natural philosophy as could be learned from Pliny. The study of the Scriptures was carried on during the whole course. Ecgberht finished the education of the students, but he kept always in touch with them. We are told that he spent the morning with the young clerks, sitting on his couch, teaching and lecturing. At noon he celebrated mass in his private chapel; his dinner was meagre. During the meal and afterwards he discussed literary questions with the students. At evening, after the service, he dismissed them, as they knelt one by one before him, with his blessing. No life could be more gentle and simple. Splendid in public, he was sparing in private affairs. His chief work was, therefore, educational, but he wrote a few books—a volume of Episcopal Offices, Extracts on Church Discipline, a Penitentiale and Confessionale, standard authorities in the Anglo-Saxon Church. It is probable that these were written both in English and Latin, and, if this be true, we may class him among English writers.[1]

Cuthbert, gave also a cover to the Manuscript which Bilfrid, an anchorite and goldsmith, decorated with silver, gold, and gems.

[1] Wright, *Biog. Literaria*, vol. i. p. 302.

When he died, in 766, he was succeeded by Æthelberht or Ælberht, his friend, his chief assistant in the school, and a better scholar than himself. It was Æthelberht who taught, under Ecgberht, grammar, law, poetry, rhetoric, astronomy, natural philosophy, and all the matters Alcuin collects under Physica, Logica, and Ethica. We may well call him, not only a great ecclesiastic, but a great Public Schoolmaster. Æthelberht was the chief collector and administrator of the famous library. Alcuin, his fellow-scholar, who assisted him in the teaching of the schools, travelled also with him, seeking for books and manuscripts in Gaul and Rome, and in 770 no library outside of Rome was to be compared with that at York.[1] Under his rule, and he was equally remarkable, Alcuin says, for activity of mind, tact in administration, and lovingness of heart, learning radiated from York even more lucidly than under Ecgberht; a greater number of students poured into the city, and missionary enterprise was not forgotten. The Church in Germany was deeply indebted to him. Nor in other matters were his interests only English. He was in constant correspondence with

[1] Here is Alcuin's description of the studies Æthelberht directed at York—

Indolis egregiae juvenes quoscunque videbat,
Hos sibi conjunxit, docuit, nutrivit, amavit;
His dans grammaticae rationis gnaviter artes,
Illis rhetoricae infundens refluamina linguae;
Illos juridica curavit cote polire;
Illos Aonio docuit concinnere cantu,
Et juga Parnassi lyricis percurrere plantis.
Ast alios fecit praefatus nosse magister
Harmoniam coeli, solis lunaeque labores,
Quinque poli zonas, errantia sydera septem,
Astrorum leges, ortus simul atque recessus,
Aerios motus pelagi, terraeque tremorem,
Naturas hominum, pecudum, volucrumque ferarum,
Diversas numeri species variasque figuras.
Paschalique dedit solemnia certa recursu,
Maxime Scripturae pandens mysteria sacrae.

De Pont. Ebor.

Rome and the great monastic centres. York knew all that was doing and was an impulse over the whole of Christendom. Art also was not neglected. In 741 the Minster at York was burnt. Æthelberht remade it; he preserved and embellished the little oratory in which Eadwine was baptized in 627, and set up in it an altar dedicated to St. Paul, enriched with gold, silver, and gems. A huge candelabrum of three branches hung over it, and a Rood embossed with gold and silver. Another altar to the Martyrs and the Holy Cross was ornamented with equal richness. Eanbald, the next Archbishop, and Alcuin superintended the building. Alcuin describes it as a lofty temple, set on pillars over the crypts, bright with ceilings and windows, apsidal chapels round, and containing thirty altars. It is pleasant to think that Æthelberht saw it finished, and blessed his work. He had retired from his duties in 780, but ten days before his death in 782 he emerged from his rooms and dedicated the Minster he had raised. Well might he have said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace," for he had not only written his epistle on the hearts of the many scholars he had trained, and especially on Alcuin, whose work transfused Europe with the new learning, but he had now written in stone a noble memorial of his love of God and man. Wise, eager in learning as teaching, a greater traveller and searcher for books than even his predecessor Ecgberht,[1] a better librarian, a passionate

[1] Alcuin says of Ecgberht—

> Non semel externas peregrino tramite terras
> Jam peragravit ovans, Sophiae ductus amore;
> Si quid forte novi librorum aut studiorum
> Quod secum ferret, terris reperiret in illis.
>
> *De Pont. Ebor.* 1454.

lover of the books he had collected (*caras super omnia gazas*, he calls them), safe in advice, ready in sympathy, his praise was tenderly sung by his finest scholar—

> O pater, O pastor, vitae spes maxima nostrae,
> Te sine nos ferimur turbata per aequora mundi,
> Te duce deserti variis involvimur undis,
> Incerti qualem mereamur tangere portum.
> Sidera dum lucent, trudit dum nubila ventus,
> Semper honos, nomenque tuum, laudesque manebunt.
>
> *De Pont. Ebor.* 1596.

During Æthelberht's life Alcuin had taught the school, and raised its fame and use to a higher level; but the date of Æthelberht's death is also the date of the beginning of the decay of the learning of York. Not only did Eanbald, his successor, become involved in the political anarchy of Northumbria, and neglected, or could not direct, the school; but in the very year of Æthelberht's death Alcuin left the school. Up to 782 Alcuin belongs to literature in England. The literary child of Baeda, his birth almost coincides with Baeda's death. A greater scholar than either Ecgberht or Æthelberht, he was the pupil of both. He not only, as we have seen, took charge of the school when Æthelberht became Archbishop,but he was entrusted with the care and increase of the library.[1] In these earlier duties he learnt to be the great administrator, organiser, and teacher he afterwards became. He met Charles for the first time at Pavia, about 780, and pleased the King. He met him again at Parma, in 781, joined his court in 782, and remained eight years, taking charge of the Palatine Schools. All this time he was eagerly at work, teaching and establishing fresh schools,

[1] He writes to Charles the Great from Tours in 796: "I feel bitterly here the need of those priceless books of learning which I had in my own country, by the loving industry of my master, and in some measure by my own humble labours. Let me send some of my youth over to bring back to France the flowers of Britain."

"restoring the knowledge," says Bishop Stubbs, "of the sacred languages, of the text of the Bible and Service Books, and the moral rigour of ecclesiastical discipline. How laboriously Alcuin did these duties, the list of his works will show. The extent of his influence is proved by his letters, and the success of his work by the literary history of the following century."

In 790 he was again in Northumbria, and the love of his country urged him to remain, but in 792 he rejoined Charles and never again visited England. Thus we may say that from this year, or more truly from 782, Alcuin does not belong to the history of literature in England, but to the history of the new planting of literature on the Continent by the hands of English scholars.[1] He took with him a number of men who had been educated at York, both English and foreign,[2] and with their assistance set up higher schools in Gaul and Germany. He constantly sent to York for books and fresh helpers. English scholars visited him, wherever he was, in large numbers, and many remained with him. Northumbria was in too unsettled a state to suit scholars who wished to get on in life. They preferred a growing to a decaying

[1] Baeda remained the specially English scholar. Alcuin's questions on Genesis, and it may be a few other of his works, were translated into Anglo-Saxon in the tenth century, and Wright says that the number of manuscripts of it which are still extant suggests that it was a popular book.

[2] Liudger, a Frieslander, Sigibodus, and Alubert, an English missionary, were sent by Gregory of Utrecht to study at York with Alcuin. Liudger stayed a year and returned, but again lived in England for three years and a half, and finally bore back with him a large store of books. His history is the history of many. Wizo, Fridugis, and Sigulf went abroad with Alcuin. We hear, however, by name of few native English scholars as assistants of Alcuin. Nevertheless a host of his countrymen crowded to see him at Tours. Lingard quotes a story from his biographer: "As Aigulf, an English priest, entered the monastery at Tours, four of the French clergy were standing at the gate, and one of them exclaimed in his own language—'Good God! when will this house be delivered from the crowds of Britons who swarm to that old fellow like so many bees?'"

kingdom, and it is not too much to say that Alcuin drained York of its best scholars, and hastened the paralysis of its literature.

He died in 804, and left behind him an extensive series of books, many of which did their work of kindling the new fires of learning in Europe, and then were exhausted, or superseded. His numerous exegetical, dogmatic, and liturgical works are of no value as literature. A few biographies remain, of which the most interesting is that of St. Willibrord, the apostle of the Frisians, of whose noble house he was himself a scion. The longest of his many Latin poems (of which the most heartfelt is that on the destruction of Lindisfarne) is also the most attractive—*De Pontificibus et Sanctis Ecclesiae Eboracensis.* It is our best contemporary authority for the history of the Church and School of York from the consecration of Ecgberht to the accession of Eanbald, and is full of pleasant details. But the most important of his writings, both as literature and for the use of history, is the collection of his letters, nearly three hundred of which exist. Many are written to his correspondents in England, to English kings, bishops, abbots, and monks; many of a gayer kind to his pupils and friends, and to the women he reverenced. Others are sent to Charles the Great, to Adrian I., to the Patriarchs of Jerusalem and Aquileia, to his fellow-workers in the renaissance of learning in Gaul and Germany; and they form together a body of materials of great importance for the history of the time.

None of this work belongs to English literature in England; but it belongs to the glory of England to say that it was an English scholar of York who exactly at the right time bore off to the Continent the

whole of English learning, and out of English learning built up a new world. Had Alcuin remained in England, had learning been confined to our shores, it would have perished in a few years under the destroying flood of the Danish invasions. It lived and flourished and brought forth a noble harvest in the new empire. Instead of a little and dying kingdom in the north of England the huge Frankish dominion became the home of literature. The patron of learning was no longer a small provincial king, like Eadberht, with his power trembling to its fall, but the man who in a few years became the Head of the Holy Roman Empire; and the glory of that great title and of all it meant threw its glamour and its dignity over letters. They marched with the Empire's march and took of its youth and energy. Alcuin led them, nourished and established them. The seat of learning was thus no longer England, but the new city was built with living stones from England. This is one of our glories, and York may well boast of being its fount and origin. But this glory was now no longer in York itself. The death of Æthelberht and the departure of Alcuin in the same year place us at the point when the decay of the School of York began. Learning sickened from within, afflicted by the anarchy in Northumbria, and when she was far gone in disease she was finally smitten to death by the Danes. The history of this double woe, and the destruction in which it ended, will close this book.

In 780 Æthelberht, retiring from active life, associated with himself Eanbald, who, two years afterwards, succeeded him as Archbishop, and came to his death in 796. During these fourteen stormy years the school at York lived on, but it lived in trouble and in

fear. King after king of Northumbria was dethroned, exiled or murdered. Four of them perished before the Archbishop's death. Alfwold, who became king in 778, was slain in 789. Osred, who succeeded him, was betrayed and driven away in 790, and Æthelred, now king, had himself been banished by Alfwold. Two years afterwards Æthelred slew Osred who had tried to regain the kingdom. In his turn, Æthelred was slaughtered by his own people in 794, and Eardulf succeeded him in 795, the year before Archbishop Eanbald died. In these fierce tempests of anarchy no assistance could be given by the kings to the school at York, and the political troubles probably disturbed the lives and work of its teachers. Indeed, with the exception of a few letters addressed to Eanbald by his friend Alcuin, there is no literary news belonging to his archbishopric. Affairs were no better, but rather worse during the years of his successor, Eanbald II. A fierce revolt, led by Alric, was finally subdued by Eardulf at the battle of Whalley in 798. The next year Eardulf slew another pretender to the kingdom, and the year after he murdered Alchmund, the legitimate heir to the Northumbrian throne. Six years of comparative quiet followed, and then Eardulf was driven away by another Alfwold who apparently held a precarious kingship for four years. Eanred then, the son of Eardulf, seized the throne in 810, and reigned over an expiring Northumbria. The *Chronicle* takes no notice of him or of any one after Eardulf; and it tells of the close of the independent Northumbrian kingdom, when Ecgberht of Wessex became its overlord, in terms almost contemptuous in their brevity. "827. And Ecgberht led an army to Dore against the North Humbrians and they offered

him there obedience and allegiance, and with that, they separated." This was the state of things during the archbishopric of Eanbald II.; and it accounts for the increasing sickness of the school of York. It was not met by any noble sacrifice on the part of the clergy. They became more and more luxurious; the monasteries went from bad to worse; the parish priests lost all learning. Even the Archbishop lived more like a temporal than a spiritual prince. Troops of soldiers attended him and troops of courtiers, as he went from place to place through his diocese. Alcuin was greatly distressed by all he heard; he hopes, and the hope is like a reproach, "that sacred studies will not be neglected at York, and all the pains I took in collecting books be labour lost." It was labour lost for Northumbria now, but it was not altogether Eanbald's fault that he could not attend to the school at York. He had quarrelled with the court; the political whirlpool had sucked him in. King Eardulf complained that he sheltered his enemies and joined the plots against his throne. Hence, the Archbishop was seldom or never at York, and the school naturally ebbed away. In addition to this, we understand from the records of the Synod of Pincanhalth held in 790—the first and last synod of doctrinal note since that of Whitby—that the old Celtic party had not quite died out, and that there was a reaction in York itself against the Latin authority represented by the Archbishop, at least this is Mr. Raine's opinion. Of greater interest than this supposition is a sentence in one of the decrees of this synod, the mournful cry of which makes us feel that the days of Northumbria's religious and literary glory had passed away. "There were days," it says, "when we had righteous kings and dukes and bishops, of whose wisdom Nor-

thumbria still smells sweetly." *Fuimus Troes.* It is the epitaph of Northumbria, of her poetry, her literature, and her great school. All is now weakness, indifference, and darkness.

This is the internal decay. Meanwhile, from without a dreadful blow had been given to literature and knowledge. In 793, while Eanbald I. was Archbishop of York, the Vikings dashed for the first time upon the coasts of Northumbria. So terrible seemed the blow, the very heavens and earth were thought to have presaged it. "This year," says the *Chronicle*, "dire forewarnings came on the land of the Northumbrians and brought wretchedness and fear upon the folk. There were mickle whirlwinds and lightnings, and fiery dragons were seen flying in the air. A great famine followed these tokens, and a little after that in the same year, on the 6th before the Ides of January, the ravaging of heathen men mournfully overthrew God's Church at Lindisfarne with rapine and slaughter." Nor was this the only warning. Alcuin saw, in 790 when he was on a visit to Æthelred, "a rain of blood at a time when the sky was cloudless fall from the high roof of the northern aisle of St. Peter in York, the capital of the kingdom. Did it not denote," he writes to the King, "that carnage would come upon us and from the North?" These are words which only express half his horror and distress.[1] He cries out elsewhere that the sanctuaries were defiled at Lindisfarne, the priests slain at the altar, that St. Cuthbert could not save his own. "The most venerable place in Britain, where Christianity first took root

[1] I am not sure of the date of this letter. If it was written before 793, the phrase "and from the North" would have nothing to do with the attack on Lindisfarne.

among us after Paullinus went away from York, is a prey to heathen men. Who thinks of this calamity and does not cry out to God to spare his country, has a heart of stone and not of flesh." He wrote, however, from his safe retreat on the Continent, and he could not avoid preaching a somewhat elaborate sermon on luxury to the monastery. "This is," he says, "the beginning of a greater trouble to come, or a punishment for their sins." The first supposition was true, and he might have spared them the second. Afterwards, when the horror of it had lessened, he was able to compose on the tempting subject one of his best Latin poems.

The year after he had another opportunity, for "the heathen ravaged among the North Humbrians again, and plundered Ecgferth's monastery at the mouth of the Wear." When Jarrow and Wearmouth thus suffered, Alcuin was even more grieved. The mother Church of Northumbria was smitten at Lindisfarne; but the mother of all Northumbrian learning was smitten at Jarrow, and this struck the scholar a still heavier blow. What would become of knowledge, of all the materials of knowledge, of the libraries, of the school at the capital, if the heathen prevailed still more? But Northumbria had yet a breathing time before the full wrath of the tempest broke upon her. Wearmouth and Jarrow, warned by Lindisfarne, were not surprised. They were defended, and it is probable that the libraries were saved for a time. One of the Danish leaders was slain. Some of their ships were wrecked by a storm. Many of their crews were drowned, and those who swam to shore alive were slain at the mouth of the river. It may be that this repulse kept the coast somewhat free from

roving piracy; for we do not hear of more than a few attacks made on the Northumbrian shores; and it is probable that the monastic life went on, undisturbed save by fear, in Tynemouth and Jarrow, at Coldingham and Whitby.

It was a different story later on when the Danish fury came upon the Northumbrian monasteries, not from the sea, but from the inland; not with a few ships led by single rovers, but with a well-horsed and complete army. This took place in 867. There was an interval then of seventy-four years between the attack on Lindisfarne and the final destruction of the Northumbrian seats of learning. During that time uneasiness, dread, preparations for defence, absence of quiet and of hope, weakened at every point the growth of learning. Whenever an attack was made on a coast-monastery, its treasures and its books would probably be sent into the interior, and I believe that, as the Danes pressed harder on the East Anglian coasts, and as their terror grew in the North, York became the refuge and the receiver of the best of the books and learned men of Northumbria. This was the centre which was now attacked. "The Army," having wintered and horsed itself in East Anglia, passed over the mouth of the Humber into Northumbria and, assisted by the anarchy in the kingdom, for two rivals were fighting for the throne, had an easy conquest of York. Late in the year the two kings united their forces against the common foe, drove the Danes from the fortifications, burst into the town, and all but won it back. But the Danes rallied and drove the English out in turn, slew both kings, and the remainder made peace with the army of the heathen. With the fall of the capital Northumbria became Danish. But the rest of the

province was still unplundered, and the Danes, setting out from York, burned and utterly destroyed all the monastic establishments of Deira. A few years after, "the Army," under Halfdene, rooted out all the Abbeys of Bernicia. There was not one house of learning left from the Humber to the Forth. Bishoprics perished, even so great a one as Hexham; all the libraries, all the schools, all the stored-up knowledge of two hundred years were swept away; and the same fate about the same time befell the great monastic houses of Mercia and East Anglia. Amid this vast destruction, so overwhelming that Northumbria did not recover from it till long after the Norman Conquest, York, it appears to me, still retained some learning. As it seems partly to have escaped destruction when the English took it, so it seems to have been partly spared by the Danes. They made a peace with its people in 867; they sat there a whole year in 869. It was the headquarters of "the Army," and it is likely that the School, so far as it existed at all, was let alone. If it was let alone, it would save its most precious manuscripts; and all the men who succeeded in escaping from Wearmouth, Whitby, Tynemouth, Lastingham, Ripon, Hexham, and the rest, would find some shelter there for themselves and for whatever books they had saved. There would be then at York enough of Northumbrian literature left to supply Wessex in Ælfred's reign with English war-poems like *Beowulf*, and with collections of religious poems like those in the Exeter Book. This possibility, to which I draw attention, of York having as a seat of literature escaped the absolute destruction which fell upon the other schools and libraries of the North seems somewhat supported by the fact of the great increase not long after this time

of the power of the See of York. Moreover, if the School was not utterly destroyed at first, it would be likely to drag on an existence; for only nine years after the capture of York by the Danes the invaders settled down, and York became the capital under a constituted government of a Danish kingdom. Halfdene in 876 apportioned the lands of South Northumbria among his followers. They began to live as ploughers and tillers of the soil. The city again sat as Queen upon her river; merchants again took up their quarters in her streets, the place was quiet; the Archbishop still governed the churches. Amid the gloom which hangs over history at this time we distinguish nothing of the School, but if anything was saved of the library, the letters and the manuscripts in the buildings about the Minster, it now continued safe; and when it became known in the North that Ælfred welcomed to his court all who could bring him a book or a manuscript to add to the library at Winchester, the remnants of literature left at York would be carried southward. It was thus, I suggest, that the Northumbrian poetry reached Wessex, and reaching it, was put into the Wessex dialect.[1]

This is the last word of the first act of English literature which we have followed for so long. The curtain falls on the scenes the action of which moved with Theodore and Ealdhelm in Canterbury and Wessex; on those which in a wilder land brought

[1] Mercia may, however, had something to do with this. The western part of Mercia had been saved at the peace of Wedmore from the Danes, and Bishop Werfrith had kept some learning and teaching together in the school he set up at Worcester. Worcester may then have been the half-way house in which many of the poor scholars, bearing manuscripts from York, took refuge, before they made their way to Ælfred. It was in western Mercia that Ælfred sought for help when he began his literary work. But the story of this belongs properly to the next volume of this book.

before our eyes the cliffs of Whitby, the island rock of Lindisfarne, the Wear where it opens towards the sea, the lonely moors of the border, the peopled vales of Yorkshire, the school beside the Minster. All has passed away, and with the scenery the great figures that went to and fro through it—Eadwine and Oswald, Caedmon and Hild, Benedict and Baeda, Ecgberht, Æthelberht, and Alcuin, Cynewulf and his fellows; and behind them, in the mists of the distant ground, and in another England, the giant shapes of Beowulf and Hygelac, of Grendel and his dam, of Finn and Scyld. The first Act is played out; when the curtain rises again, it will rise on a different scene, and in a different land. Wessex will take the place of Northumbria. We shall then look on the royal figure of Ælfred, his sword laid down for a time, his pen in his hand, sitting in his king's houses or in his town of Winchester, and grouped around him the scholars of a new time; and the fashion of their speech will have changed. As the characters of the first Act of English Literature spoke in poetry, so those of the second will speak in prose.

NOTES

A.—(CHAPTER XXII)

THE "WANDERER" AND THE "SEAFARER" IN BLANK VERSE

The Prologue

A lonely man full often finds his grace,
God's tender pity: though in care of mind
Need drive him many days o'er ocean's path
To push with hands the frost-cold sea, and sail
The exile-tracks! O Wyrd is fully wrought!
Thus quoth a Wanderer, mindful of his woes,
Of direful slaughters, and of kinsmen's death.

THE WANDERER

"Oft must I, lonely, at each early dawn
Bewail my care. There's not one living man
10. To whom I now dare tell my hidden heart
With open freedom—O full well I know,
It is a noble habit in an earl,
To lock the cupboard of his soul, and safe
Keep his thought-hoard, while, as he will, he thinks.
A wearied mind may not withstand the Wyrd,
Nor any troubled spirit plan its aid;
Wherefore those eager for their Honour bind,
Close-locked within the coffer of their breast,
Their dreary thought—and so must I tie up
20. My soul in fetters; I, so poor, careworn,
Cut off from home, from all my kinsmen far,
Since, long, long years ago, the dark of earth
Wrapt my Gold-friend; and I have ever since
Gone winter-woeful o'er the woven seas!
Sad then, I sought a treasure-giver's hall,
Where I might find, or far or near, some Lord,

Who in the mead-hall would my memory know,
Or will to comfort me a friendless man,
Or pleasure me with joys !
Who tries it, knows
30. How cruel sorrow for a comrade is
To him who few of loved fore-standers has !
He holds the exile's path, not plaited gold ;
A frozen bosom, not the fruits of earth !
He minds him of the hall, of heroes there,
Of taking gifts, and how his golden friend
Feasted his youth. Fallen, fallen is all that joy !
O well he knows this, who must long forego
The wise redes of his loved, his friendly Lord,
But most when sleep and sorrow, both at one,
40. Bind up the poor, the lonely wanderer's soul !
Him dreameth then that he doth clip and kiss
His Man-lord, and together head and hands
Lay on his knee, as once, when at his will,
In days gone by the Gift-stool he enjoyed.
Then doth the friendless man awake again,
And sees before him heave the fallow waves,
The foam-birds bathe, and broaden out their wings,
And falling sleet and snow, shot through with hail :
Then all the heavier is his wound of heart,
50. Sore for its own, and sorrow is renewed.
In dreams, his kinsmen flit across his mind,
With songs he greets them, glad, he watches them ;
But these heroic comrades swim away !
The ghost of these air-floaters brings to him
Few well-known words ! Once more his grief is new,
Who now must send, again and yet again,
His weary spirit o'er the binding seas !
So in this world I may not understand
Wherefore my mind does not grow black as night,
60. Whene'er I think all on the life of men,
How suddenly they gave their house-floor up,
These mighty-mooded Thegns ! Thus doth Mid-Garth,
Day after day, droop down and fall to nought.
Wherefore no man is wise, till he has owned
His share of years on earth ! The wise must be
Patient, not too hot-hearted, nor of words
Too quick, nor heedless, nor too weak in war,
Too fearful, or too fain, nor yet of goods
Too greedy, nor too keen to boast, until
70. He know his way ! A man must wait, whene'er
He make a vow, till, bold, he surely know
Whither will turn the thought within his heart.
Grave men should feel how phantom-like it is,
When all this world's weal stands awaste ; as now,

Unnumbered, o'er this land, are ruined towns,
Swept by the storm, thick covered by white frost,
Dismantled all their courtyards, and the Hall
Where wine was drunk, in dust! Low lies its Lord,
Bereft of joy; and all the peers have fallen,
80. Haughty, before the rampart. War seized some
And bore them on death-paths; and one a ship
Took o'er the towering wave! The hoary wolf
Another tore when dead; and one an earl
Hid in the hollowed earth with dreary face.
So hath men's Maker wasted this Earth's home,
Until the work of elder giants stood
Void of its Burghers, all bereft of joys!
Who wisely has thought o'er this ruined Stead,
And this dark life doth deeply muse upon;—
90. Gray-haired in soul—in exile oft recalls
Uncounted slaughters, and this Word cries out—
'Where went the horse, where went the Man? Where went the Treasure-giver?
Where have the seats of feasting gone? and where the joys in hall?
Alas, the beaker bright! alas, the byrnied warrior!
Alas, the people's pride! O how is fled that time,
Beneath the Night-helm gloomed, as if it ne'er had been.
Alone is left, to tell of those loved peers,
This wall huge-high, spotted with carven snakes!
The strength of ashen spears took off the earls,
100. Blood-thirsty weapons, and the far-famed Wyrd!
Lo! these hewn cliffs are beaten by the storms,
The snow-drift driving down binds up the earth,
Winter's wild terror, when it cometh wan!
Night's shadow blackens, sending from the North
Fierce slants of hail for harmfulness to men!
Wyrd's dooming changes all beneath the heaven;
Here fleets our wealth, and here is fleeting friend,
Here fleets the kinsman, here is fleeting man;
110. The roots of all this earth are idle made.'"

Epilogue

So quoth the Wise of mood! Apart
He sat, and made his runes.
Who keeps his troth, is brave of soul,
Nor shall he, over-rash,
Ever give voice to woe of heart
Till first its cure he knows;
So acts a man of fortitude!
Yet, well for him who seeks
Strength, mercy from the Father, where
Our fortress standeth sure.

THE SEAFARER

The Old Sailor—

Sooth is the song that I shall sing, and tell
Of sailing on the sea! O, oft have I
Endured in woeful days the painful hours,
And bitter care of heart have borne, and known
Unnumbered seats of sorrow in my ship!
Fearful the weltering waves, when 'twas my part
Strait watch to keep at night upon the prow,
When onward drove my bark beside the cliffs.
Frost pinched my feet fettered with clamps of ice;
10. But hot about my heart was sighing Care,
And Hunger took my fortitude from me,—
Sea-wearied me! O little knows the man
To whom it haps most happily on earth,
How, carked with care, on frozen seas I lived
Dark Winter through upon a Wanderer's ways;
Forlorn of joys, of kinsmen loved bereft,
Icicle-hung, while flew the hail in showers!
Nought heard I but the thunder-roar of seas,
Of ice-chilled waves, and whiles, the whooping swan!
20. The gannet's scream was all the joy I knew,
I heard the seal swough 'stead of mirth of men;
And for mead-drinking heard the sea-mew cry!
The storm-winds lashed the crags, the ocean-tern
Answered them, icy-plumed; and oft the Earn,
Her wet wings dripping rain, barked her reply.
. . . . O none of kinsfolk then
Might stir to joy my solitary soul!
Wherefore he little thinks, who, in the burgs,
Owns only life's delight and little bale,
Haughty and insolent with wine, how I,
30. Weary, must on the ocean-paths outstay!
Dark grew Night's shadow; from the North it snowed;
Frost bound the field; hail fell upon the earth,
Coldest of grains!

The Young Sailor—

Why crash together then
Thoughts in my heart that I myself should tempt
The high-tossed seas, the sport of the salt waves?
A lust doth hour by hour prick on my soul,
To set my life sea-faring, and to seek
Far off from hence the shores of outland men.

The Old Sailor—

Lives no man on the earth so proud of heart,
40. So generous in youth, so good at gifts,

In deeds so daring, to his Lord so dear,
But to the Deep is ever his desire
To find the work his Lord may will for him.
Not for the harp or spending rings his heart;
Woman delights him not, nor yet the world;
Nothing he cares for save the heaving waves;
Whom the Sea urges, longs for evermore!

The Young Sailor—

The trees rebloom; again the burgs grow fair;
Winsome the wide plains, and the earth is gay—
50. But all doth challenge the impassioned life
Of his brave spirit to sea-voyage, who
Thinks to sail far across the ocean surge.

The Old Sailor—

The cuckoo warns you with his fateful song,
That summer's watchman sings, but woe he bodes,
Bitter the breast within! No happy man,
No hero knows what he must bear, who sets
His exile-wanderings furthest on the sea.

The Young Sailor—

Wherefore my Thought now hovers o'er my heart,
Above the surging flood, the whale's homeland,
60. My Spirit flies away; and hovers then
Far o'er the lap of earth; and now wings back,
Greedy and hungering, again to me.
That lonely Flier yells, and drives me forth
Across the Whale's path, irresistibly,
Along high-leaping seas; for sweeter far
The joys of God are there than this dead life
That swoons away on land.

B.—(CHAPTER XXIV)

THE SOURCES OF THE "CHRIST"

The extracts from the two Homilies which follow, and the Hymn *De Die Judicii*, are printed from Mr. Gollancz's edition of the *Christ*. Every critic has pointed out these homiletic sources, but Professor Cook (*Modern Language*, Notes, June 1889) was the first, I think, to show that this ancient Latin Hymn was probably used by Cynewulf. I say *probably*, because there must have been, before the eighth century, a great number of Hymns on this sub-

ject; and no doubt a similar treatment and similar phrases ran through them all. When it is said, then, that this was one of Cynewulf's sources, we do not mean that Cynewulf used this or that which was not fairly his own. The phrases were common property; every preacher used them. The originality of any poet or preacher consisted, not in the invention of a new treatment of the subject or a new phrase, but in the way he filled up the old treatment, or in the way he turned an old phrase so as to dignify it. Cynewulf has made the things he has taken from the Hymn—if it was this special Hymn which lay before him—quite distinct in manner and feeling. Take the phrase,

> Erubescet orbis lunae, sol et obscurabitur,
> Stellae cadent pallescentes,

> As blood shall be the Moones sphere and dark shall grow the Sun;
> The stars shall pale their light and fall.

This is the Latin. It may be better, in the opinion of many, than Cynewulf's work; but that is not the point. The point is that Cynewulf has passed it through the furnace of his own imagination, and made it another thing altogether. It is no longer Latin, it is Northumbrian; and it illustrates all I have said in the Chapter on the distinctiveness of native Northumbrian poetry. When the Latin traditions did enter Northumbria, they were vitally altered. They lost their Latin note and sounded an English note. Here is the English—

> Þonne weorþeð sunne sweart gewended
> On blodes hiw seo ðe beorhte scan
> Ofer aer-woruld aelda bearnum.
> Mona þaet sylfe þe aer mon-cynne
> Nihtes lyhte niþer gehreoseð
> And steorran swa some stredað of heofone
> Þurh ða strongan lyft stormum abeatne.

> Then shall the Sun, all dusky turned, be changed
> To hue of blood, that once so brightly shone
> Above the Ere-world for the bairns of men:
> So too the Moon that erst herself by night
> Lighted mankind, precipitately falls,
> Likewise the stars from heaven hurtle down,
> Through the strong Lift lashed to and fro by storms.

It is expanded, no doubt; but it is English, not Latin.

Moreover, it is worth while to compare Gregory's phrase, "Quis enim solis nomine nisi Dominus, et quae lunae nomine nisi ecclesia designatur?" with Cynewulf's expansion of it into a simile which I

have given in the note on p. 229. How much tenderness, how much delight, in the nature of the sun and moon themselves is added to the Latin! The prose has become soft poetry. The passage which concerns the leaps of Christ may also be compared. It is said that the words, "Quamvis adhuc rerum perturbationibus animus fluctuet, jam tamen spei vestrae anchoram in aeternam patriam figite," is the source of the sea-simile beginning—

Nu is þon gelicost swa we on lagu-flode,

which is translated at p. 231; but, if so, what a change; what an illustration it is of what a poet can do with a well-worn thought! How little of the Latin convention is in it, how much of Northumbrian individuality and of Cynewulf's distinctive feeling! See, too, all that he has added in his working up (p. 234) of the passage in the Homily *in Die Epiphaniae* about the sorrow of the universe at the death of Jesus.

C.—(CHAPTER XXIV)

LATIN SOURCES OF THE "CHRIST"

(Cf. *passus secundus*)

Homilia in Ascensione Domini

§ 9. Hoc autem nobis primum quaerendum est, quidnam fit quod nato Domino apparuerunt Angeli, et tamen non leguntur in albis vestibus apparuisse: ascendente autem Domino missi Angeli in albis leguntur vestibus apparuisse. Sic etenim scriptum est: *Videntibus illis elevatus est, et nubes suscepit eum ab oculis eorum. Cumque intuerentur in coelum euntem illum, ecce duo viri steterunt juxta illos in vestibus albis.* In albis autem vestibus gaudium et solemnitas mentis ostenditur. Quid est ergo quod nato Domino, non in albis vestibus; ascendente autem Domino, in albis vestibus Angeli apparent: nisi quod tunc magna solemnitas Angelis facta est, cum coelum Deus homo penetravit? Quia nascente Domino videbatur divinitas humiliata: ascendente vero Domino, est humanitas exaltata. Albae etenim vestes exaltationi magis congruunt quam humiliationi. In assumtione ergo ejus Angeli in albis vestibus videri debuerunt: quia qui in nativitate sua apparuit Deus humilis, in Ascensione sua ostensus est homo sublimis.

Albae vestes laetitiae indicia.

Act. i. 9.

§ 10. Sed hoc nobis magnopere, fratres carissimi, in hac solemnitate pensandum est: quia deletum est hodierna die chirographum damnationis nostrae, mutata est sententia corruptionis nostrae. Illa

Ex Ascensione Christi quid proficiamus.

Gen. iii. 19. enim natura cui dictum est : *Terra es, et in terram ibis,* hodie in coelum ivit. Pro hac ipsa namque carnis nostrae sublevatione per figuram beatus Job Dominum avem vocat. Quia enim Ascensionis ejus mysterium Judaeam non intelligere conspexit, de infidelitate ejus sententiam protulit, dicens : *Semitam ignoravit avis.* Avis enim recte appellatus est Dominus ; quia corpus carneum ad aethera libravit. Cujus avis semitam ignoravit quisquis eum ad coelum ascendisse non credidit. De hac solemnitate per Psalmistam dicitur : *Elevata est magnificentia tua super coelos.* De hac rursus ait : *Ascendit Deus in jubilatione, et Dominus in voce tubae.* De hac iterum dicit : *Ascendens in altum, captivam duxit captivitatem, dedit dona hominibus.* Ascendens quippe in altum, captivam duxit captivitatem : quia corruptionem nostram virtute suae incorruptionis absorbuit. Dedit vero dona hominibus ; quia misso desuper Spiritu, alii sermonem sapientiae, alii sermonem scientiae, alii gratiam virtutum, alii gratiam curationum, alii genera linguarum, alii interpretationem tribuit sermonum. Dedit ergo dona hominibus. De hac Ascensionis ejus gloria etiam Habacuc ait : *Elevatus est sol, luna stetit in ordine suo.* Quis enim solis nomine nisi Dominus, et quae lunae nomine nisi ecclesia designatur ? Quousque enim Dominus ascendit ad coelos, sancta ejus Ecclesia adversa mundi omnimodo formidavit : at postquam ejus Ascensione roborata est, aperte praedicavit, quod occulte credidit. Elevatus est ergo sol, et luna stetit in ordine suo : quia cum Dominus coelum petiit, sancta ejus Ecclesia in auctoritate praedicationis excrevit. Hinc ejusdem Ecclesiae voce per Salomonem dicitur : *Ecce iste venit saliens in montibus, et transiliens colles.* Consideravit namque tantorum operum culmina, et ait : *Ecce iste venit saliens in montibus.* Veniendo quippe ad redemtionem nostram, quosdam, ut ita dixerim, saltus dedit. Vultis, fratres carissimi, ipsos ejus saltus agnoscere ? De coelo venit in uterum, de utero venit in praesepe, de praesepe venit in crucem, de cruce venit in sepulcrum, de sepulcro rediit in coelum. Ecce ut nos post se currere faceret, quosdam pro nobis saltus manifestata per carnem veritas dedit : quia *exultavit ut gigas ad currendam viam suam,* ut nos ei diceremus ex corde : *Trahe nos post te, curremus in odorem unguentorum tuorum.*

Job xxviii. 7. — Psal. viii. 2. — Psal. xlvi. 6. — Psal. lxvii. 19. — 1 Cor. xii. 8. — Habac. iii. 11. — Cant. ii. 8. — Psal. xvii. 6. — Cant. i. 3.

Dominum ascendentem in coelum sequi festinemus.

§ 11. Unde, fratres carissimi, oportet ut illuc sequamur corde, ubi eum corpore ascendisse credimus. Desideria terrena fugiamus, nihil nos jam delectet in infimis, qui patrem habemus in coelis. Et hoc nobis est magnopere perpendendum : quia is qui placidus ascendit, terribilis redibit : et quidquid nobis cum mansuetudine praecepit, hoc a nobis cum districtione exiget. Nemo ergo indulta poenitentiae tempora parvipendat ; nemo curam sui, dum valet, agere negligat : quia Redemtor noster tanto tunc in judicium districtior veniet, quanto nobis ante judicium magnam patientiam praerogavit. Haec itaque vobiscum, fratres, agite : haec in mente

sedula cogitatione versate. Quamvis adhuc rerum perturbationibus animus fluctuet: jam tamen spei vestrae anchoram in aeternam patriam figite, intentionem mentis in vera luce solidate. Ecce ad coelum ascendisse Dominum audivimus. Hoc ergo servemus in meditatione, quod credimus. Et si adhuc hic tenemur infirmitate corporis, sequamur tamen eum passibus amoris. Non autem deserit desiderium nostrum ipse qui dedit, Jesus Christus Dominus noster, qui vivit et regnat cum Deo Patre in unitate Spiritus Sancti Deus, per omnia secula seculorum. Amen.

[Sancti Gregorii Magni xl. Homiliarum in Evangelia Lib. ii., Homil. xxix.]

HYMNUS DE DIE IUDICII

(Cf. *passus tertius*)

Apparebit repentina dies magna domini,
Fur obscura velut nocte improvisos occupans.

Brevis totus tum parebit prisci luxus saeculi,
Totum simul cum clarebit praeterisse saeculum.

Clangor tubae per quaternas terrae plagas concinens,
Vivos una mortuosque Christo ciet obviam.

De coelesti iudex arce, maiestate fulgidus,
Claris angelorum choris comitatus aderit:

Erubescet orbis lunae, sol et obscurabitur,
Stellae cadent pallescentes, mundi tremet ambitus.

Flamma, ignis anteibit iusti vultum iudicis,
Coelos, terras et profundi fluctus ponti decorans.

Gloriosus in sublimi rex sedebit solio,
Angelorum tremebunda circumstabunt agmina.

Huius omnes ad electi colligentur dexteram,
Pravi pavent a sinistris hoedi velut foetidi:

Ite, dixit rex ad dextros, regnum coeli sumite,
Pater vobis quod paravit ante omne saeculum;

Karitate qui fraterna me iuvistis pauperem,
Karitatis nunc mercedem reportate divites.

Laeti dicent: quando, Christe, pauperem te vidimus,
Te, rex magne, vel egentem miserati iuvimus?

Magnus illis dicet iudex: cum iuvistis pauperes,
Panem, domum, vestem dantes, me iuvistis humiles.

Nec tardabit et sinistris loqui iustus arbiter:
In gehennae maledicti flammas hinc discedite;

Obsecrantem me audire despexistis mendicum,
Nudo vestem non dedistis, neglexistis languidum.

Peccatores dicent: Christe, quando te vel pauperem,
Te, rex magne, vel infirmum contemnentes sprevimus?

Quibus contra iudex altus: mendicanti quamdiu
Opem ferre despexistis, me sprevistis improbi.

Retro ruent tum iniusti ignes in perpetuos,
Vermis quorum non morietur, flamma nec restinguitur.

Satan atro cum ministris quo tenetur carcere,
Fletus ubi mugitusque, strident omnes dentibus.

Tunc fideles ad coelestem sustollentur patriam,
Choros inter angelorum regni petent gaudia,

Urbis summae Hirusalem introibunt gloriam
Vera lucis atque pacis in qua fulget visio.

XPM. regem iam paterna claritate splendidum
Ubi celsa beatorum contemplantur agmina.—

Ydri fraudes ergo cave, infirmentes subleva,
Aurum temne, fuge luxus si vis astra petere.

Zona clara castitatis lumbos nunc praecingere,
In occursum magni regis fer ardentes lampades.

HOMILIA IN DIE EPIPHANIAE

(Cf. ll. 1126-1190)

§ 2. Omnia quippe elementa auctorem suum venisse testata sunt. Ut enim de eis quiddam usu humano loquar: Deum hunc

coeli esse cognoverunt, quia sub plantis ejus se calcabile praebuit. Terra cognovit, quia eo moriente contremuit. Sol cognovit, quia lucis suae radios abscondit. Saxa et parietes cognoverunt, quia tempore mortis ejus scissa sunt. Infernus agnovit, quia hos quos tenebat mortuos reddidit. Et tamen hunc, quem Dominum omnia insensibilia elementa senserunt, adhuc infidelium Judaeorum corda Deum esse minime cognoscunt, et, duriora saxis, scindi ad poenitendum nolunt: eumque confiteri abnegant, quem elementa, ut diximus, aut signis aut scissionibus Deum clamabant.

(In Evang. Lib. I. Homilia x.)

D.—(CHAPTERS XXIII, XXV)

THE "FATES OF THE APOSTLES" AND THE "ANDREAS"

I have treated in the text of the *Fates of the Apostles* as a separate poem, signed by Cynewulf, and I have assigned the *Andreas* to another poet than Cynewulf. I did not dwell on the critical reasons for depriving Cynewulf of the *Andreas*. The reasons I assigned were literary, and I think they had some weight. Since then, Mr. Gollancz's book on the *Christ* has appeared, and he makes, in his *Excursus on the Cynewulf-runes*, a suggestion with regard to both the *Fates of the Apostles* and the *Andreas* which is well worth consideration. The *Fates of the Apostles* is a short, abrupt poem of about a hundred lines, in which the work and death of the Twelve Apostles are, as it were, catalogued; about eight lines being assigned to each. The poem is as marrowless as a bleached bone. Not a trace of Cynewulf's tenderness or imagination is to be found in it, till we come to the personal statement at the end.

Mr. Gollancz, reading the poem with the newly-discovered runes of Cynewulf's name, thought that it was scarcely worth while to add to so short and lifeless a poem an elaborate epilogue containing the poet's signature; and has been led to the conjecture which I give now in his own words—

"The *Fates of the Apostles* consists of little more than a hundred lines: it is certainly no very meritorious piece of work, and it seems strange that the poet should have been so anxious to attest his authorship thereof by a long runic passage. In the MS. the poem immediately follows the *Legend of Andreas*, and I am more and more inclined to regard it as a mere epilogue to this more ambitious epic, standing in exactly the same relationship therefore to it that the tenth passus of *Elene* does to the whole poem. Its relationship is perhaps even closer, for whereas the ninth passus of *Elene* ends with "finit," there is no such ending of the poem in the case of *Andreas*. At the present moment I can see nothing that militates

against this view of the Cynewulfian authorship of this latter poem, and further investigation will enable us, I think, to claim that Cynewulf inserted his name in his four most important works—the epics on *Christ*, *Elene*, *Juliana*, and *Andreas*."

This is a very interesting suggestion, and I would gladly subscribe to it, but its very pleasantness makes me feel that it needs further evidence than we have at present. When I first read the *Andreas* some years ago along with the *Elene*, I was nearly certain it was by Cynewulf, but I was as nearly certain that the *Seafarer* and the *Wanderer* were also by him. But as time went on I gave up his authorship of the *Wanderer*. Then I surrendered the *Seafarer*, but I was not so sure of this surrender as I was of that of the *Wanderer*; and if Mr. Gollancz be hereafter proved to be right in his belief that the *Andreas* is Cynewulf's, I think we shall also have to give the *Seafarer* to Cynewulf. Then I finally, but with great reluctance, gave up the *Andreas*, and allotted it to some unknown poet who was a scholar or friend of Cynewulf, and now Mr. Gollancz asks me to restore it again to Cynewulf. It would be a real pleasure if I could get sufficient evidence for this. I am fond of Cynewulf's nature, character, and work, and he would stand out much more clearly and be a more various and greater poet if he wrote the *Andreas*; for the poem is quite different from his other works, more gay, more outward, more the work of a man of the world, more concise and clear in description both of events and of the natural world. It was the presence of this outwardness and the absence of any inward personal cry in the poem which especially led me to doubt that Cynewulf had written the poem. This literary argument would cease to have weight if it could be proved that the *Fates of the Apostles* was the epilogue of the poem, because the personal cry would then be added to the *Andreas*. Then, too, all the sea-passages in the *Andreas* would be in harmony with the known passion of Cynewulf for the sea. Other things also, such as the resemblances in the *Andreas* to the *Elene* and to some of the *Riddles*, would fall into a better order. Moreover, those who deny the *Andreas* to Cynewulf are forced to invent an imitator of Cynewulf who was as good a poet as himself; and the invention of an imitator, when we have a known poet at hand to whom we may with much probability allot a poem, is always a harsh proceeding; to say nothing of the argument—also of some weight—that the imitator must have been contemporary with Cynewulf, for with the Danes threatening Northumbria, poetry was not likely to have been written after Cynewulf's death. Now fine imitators are generally of a new generation, not of the same time in which the imitated poet is writing.

But when all this has been said, it must be confessed that the view that the *Fates of the Apostles* is the epilogue of the *Andreas*,

and, therefore, that the *Andreas* is Cynewulf's, is at present a happy suggestion and no more. It is really just as probable that Cynewulf should write his name in runes at the end of a short poem like the *Fates of the Apostles* as that he should write it at the end of a long one like the *Elene.* That the *Fates of the Apostles* follows the *Andreas* in the MS. of the Vercelli Book does supply a probability that it may have been the epilogue of the *Andreas,* provided some confirmatory evidence is brought of this from some other quarter. But without such evidence, the probability of the *Fates of the Apostles* being a separate poem is at present the stronger. It is said by Mr. Gollancz that before the epilogue in the *Elene* the word *Finit* stands, but that there is no *Finit* after the *Andreas.* The relationship to the *Andreas* of the *Fates of the Apostles* may then, he thinks, be even closer than the relationship of the epilogue of the *Elene* to the *Elene.* This proves too much. Moreover, the *Fates of the Apostles* begins with the usual beginning of a separate poem, with the word *Hwaet*—which was, so to speak, the call of the poet, accompanied by a sharp twang of the harp-strings, to the audience to be silent and to listen to him. This beginning more than balances any argument derived from the absence of *Finit* at the end of the *Andreas* and before the *Fates of the Apostles.*

In the epilogue to the *Elene* there is a plain reference to the rest of the poem which precedes it. "*Thus,*" Cynewulf says, "I wove within myself Wordcraft, and gave voice to my thought." In the *Fates of the Apostles* there is no reference in the first lines to the *Andreas.* The beginning—"So, sad of mood, I found this song," might be such a reference, were it not that it is followed by words which look forward to the poem which ensues, not to any poem which has gone before. "In my sick soul from far and wide I collected in what ways the Æthelings made proof of their courage"—and the Æthelings are the twelve Apostles. Moreover, when he comes to Andrew among the rest, there is no allusion whatever to him as the subject of the poem to which this *Fates of the Apostles* is supposed to be the epilogue. We might say that if it were really the epilogue of the *Andreas,* this silence would scarcely have been maintained. It is true that the beginning of the *Andreas,* in its use of heroic terms, much resembles the poet's usage in the *Fates of the Apostles*; and, moreover, there is in both the *Andreas* and the *Fates* a sparse and pale imitation of parts of *Beowulf,* but then likenesses have little weight. On the whole, though I think it extremely likely that the *Andreas* is by Cynewulf, we have as yet no evidence for that opinion.

E.—(CHAPTER XXIII)

THE RUNIC PASSAGES IN CYNEWULF'S POEMS

A.—*Christ* (796–806)

þonne · C · cwacað gehyreð cyning maeðlan
rodera ryhtend sprecan reþe word
þam þe him aer in worulde wace hyrdon
þendan · Y · and · N · yþast meahtan
frofre findan · þaer sceal forht monig
on þam wong-stede werig bidan
hwaet him aefter daedum deman wille
wraþra wita · Biþ se · W · scaecen
eorþan fraetwa · U · was longe
· L · flodum bilocen lif-wynna dael
· F · on foldan þonne fraetwe sculon
byrnan on baele.

B.—*Elene* (1257–1271)

A waes saecc oð ðaet
cnyssed cearwelmum · C · drusende
þeah he in medohealle maðmas þege
aeplede gold · Y · gnornode
· N · gefera nearusorge dreah
enge rune þaer him · E · fore
milpaðas maet modig þraegde
wirum gewlenced · W · is geswiðrad
gomen aefter gearum geogoð is gecyrred
ald onmedla · U · waes geara
geogoðhades glaem nu synt geardagas
aefter fyrstmearce forð gewitene
lifwynne geliden swa · L · toglideð
flodas gefysde · F · aeghwam bið
laene under lyfte landes fraetwe
gewitaþ under wolcnum winde geliccost.

C.—*Fata Apostolorum* (96–106)

Her maeg findan foreþances gleaw
se ðe hine lysleð leoðgiddunga
hwa þas fitte fegde · F · þaer on ende standeð
eorlas þaes on eorðan br[u]caþ ne moton hie awa aetsomne
woruldwunigende · W · sceal gedreosan
· U · on eðle aefter to-h[reosan]
laene lices fraetewa efne swa · L · toglideð
[þonne] · C · [and · Y ·] craeftes neosað
nihtes nearowe on him [· N · ligeð]
[cy]ninges þeodom, nu ðu cunnan miht
hwa on þaem wordum waes werum oncyðig.

D.—*Juliana* (704–711)

Geomor hweorfeð
·C·Y· and ·N· cyning biþ reþe
sigora syllend þonne synnum fah
·E·W· and ·U· acle bidað
hwaet him aefter daedum deman wille
lifes to leane ·L·F· beofað
seomað sorgcearig sar eal genom
synna wunde þe ic sið oððe aer
geworhte in worulde.

F.—(CHAPTER XXV)

GNOMIC VERSES

Cotton MS.

1. He, the King, shall hold the kingdom. Cities shall afar be seen;
Those that are upon this earth—artful work of giants,
Wondrous work of Wall-stones! Wind in air is swiftest,
Thunder on its path the loudest. Mighty are the powers of Christ!
Wyrd is strongest! Winter coldest,
Most hoar-frosts has Spring, he is cold the longest!
Summer is sun-loveliest; then the sky is hottest!
Autumn above all is glorious; unto men it brings
All the graining of the year God doth send to them.

13. Woe is wonderfully clinging. Onward wend the clouds;
Valiant comrades ever shall their youthful Ætheling
Bolden to the battle and the bracelet-giving!
Courage in the earl, edge shall on the helm
Bide the battle through! On the cliff the hawk,
Wild, shall won at home. In the wood the wolf,
Wretched one, apart shall dwell; in the holt the boar,
Strong with strength of teeth abides.

50. Good shall with evil, youth shall with eld,
Life shall with death, light shall with darkness,
Army with army, one foe with another,
Wrong against wrong—strive o'er the land,
Fight out their feud; and the wise man shall ever
Think on the strife of the world.

Exeter MS. B.

1. Frost shall freeze; fire melt wood,
Earth shall be growing, ice make a bridge,
The Water-helm bear, lock wondrously up
The seedlings of earth. One shall unbind

The fetters of frost—God the Almighty.
Winter shall pass, fair weather return ;
Summer is sun-hot, the sea is unstill.
The dead depth of ocean for ever is dark.[1]

82. A king shall with cattle, with armlets and beakers,
Purchase his Queen ; and both, from the first,
With their gifts shall be free. The spirit of battle
Shall grow in the man, but the woman shall thrive,
Beloved, mid her folk ; shall light-hearted live,
Counsel shall keep, shall large-hearted be !
With horses and treasure, and at giving of mead,
Everywhere, always—she shall earliest greet
The prince of the nobles, before his companions.
To the hand of her Lord, the first cup of all
Straightway she shall give ; and they both shall take rede,
House-owners, together.

126. Gold is befitting upon a man's sword ;
Good victory-gear ! Gems on a Queen ;
A good scôp for men ; for warriors the war-dart
To hold in the fight the defences of home !
A shield for the striver, a shaft for the thief,
A ring for the bride, a book for the learner,
For holy men Housel, and sins for the heathen.

These are enough to show the type. Many others, worth insertion, are already used throughout these volumes.

[1] "The dead deep wave is longest dark." The above is, I think, the meanin of this much disputed line.

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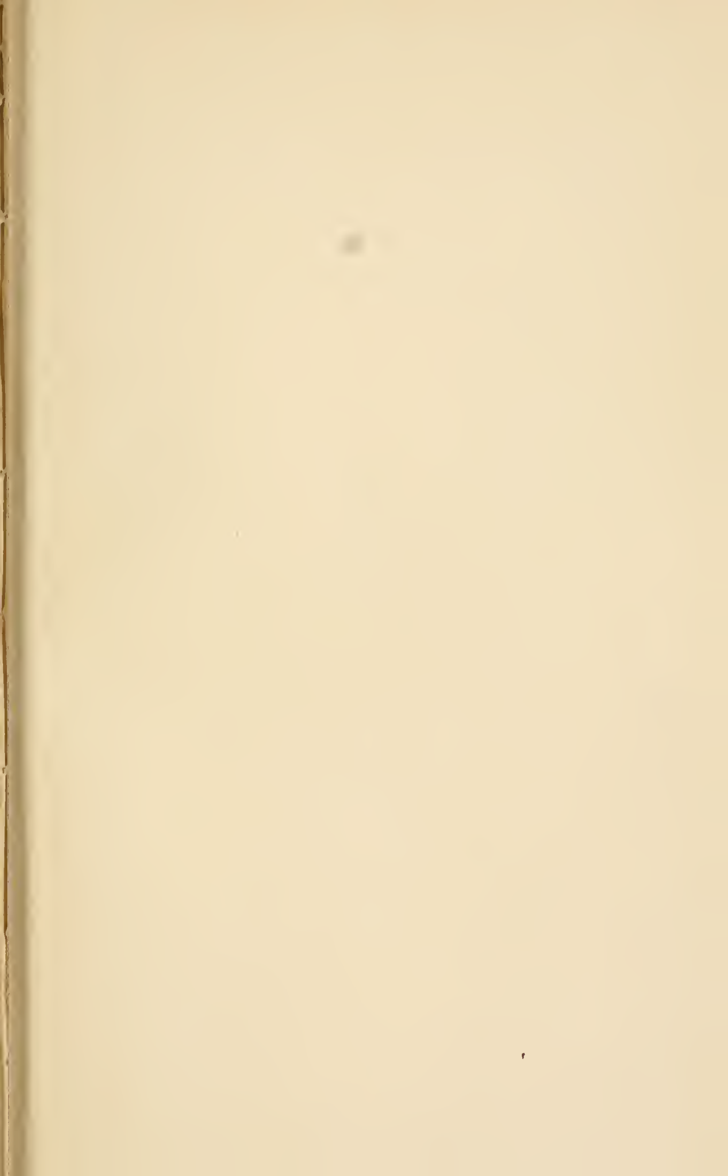

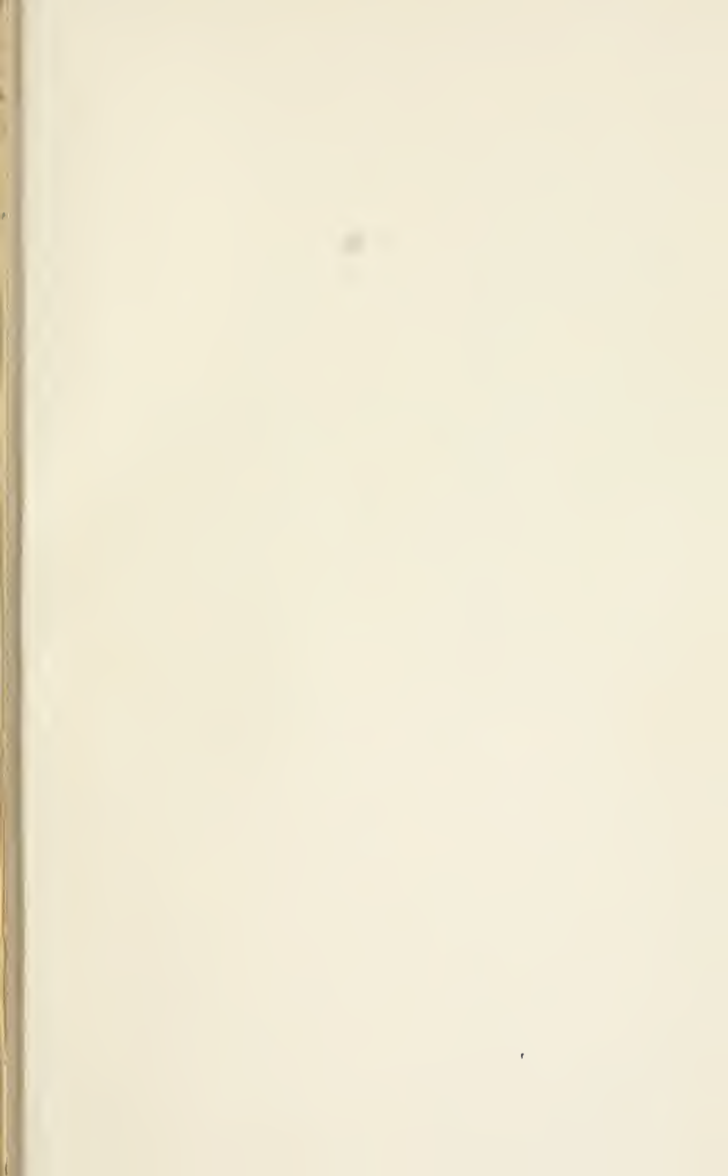

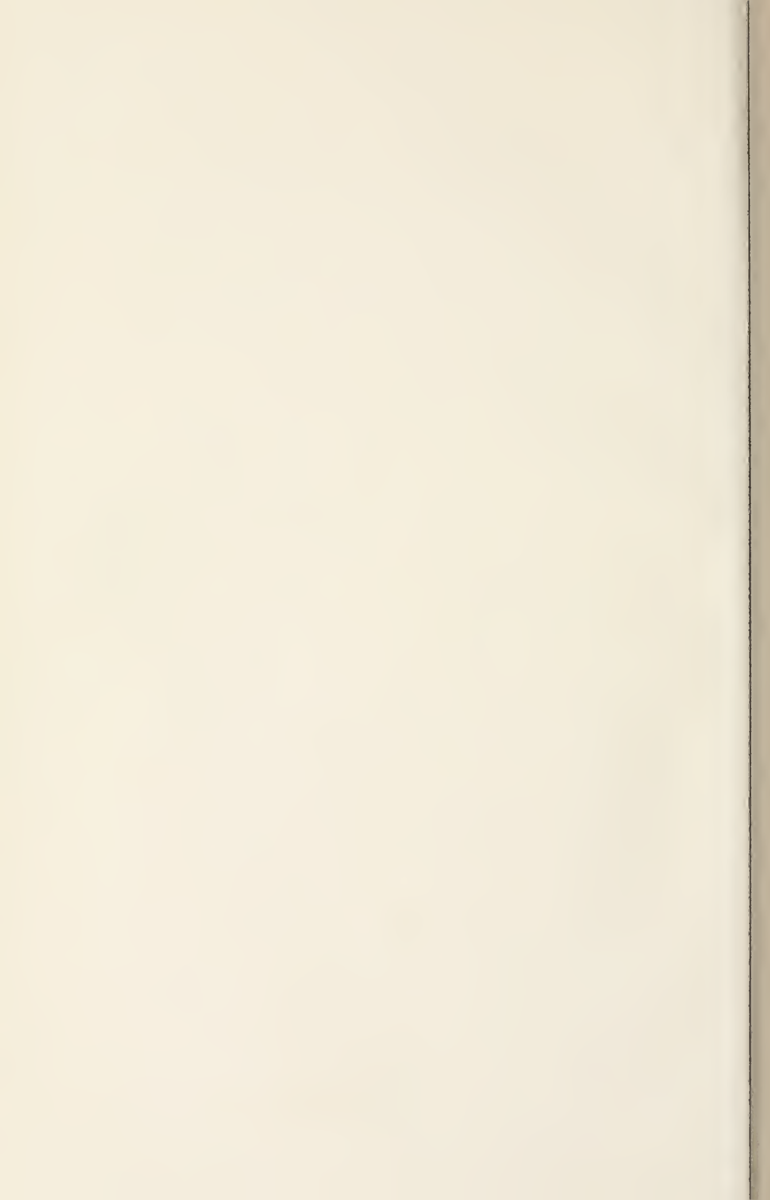

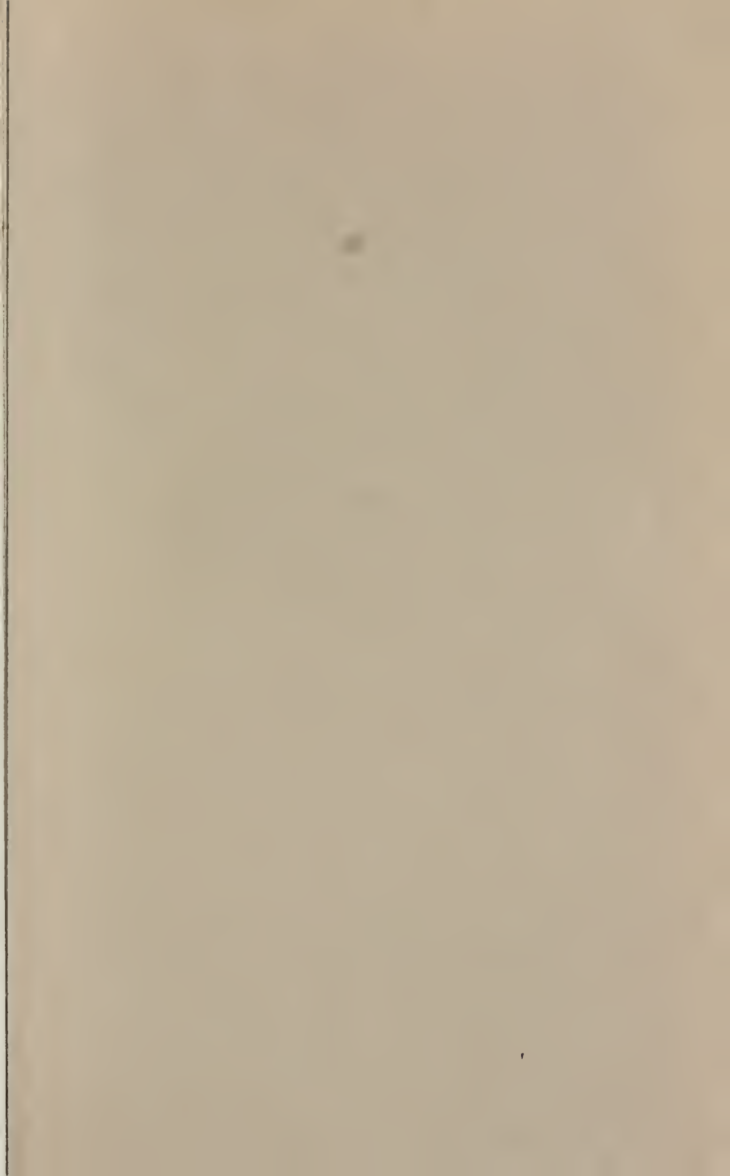

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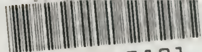
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